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ABSTRACT

During the months from February 1977 to December 1978, Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc., conducted an oral history project to produce a cross-generational comparison of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). The project was designed to train young people to be perceptive human beings who were sensitive to their environment and especially aware of their historical heritage. The initial plan was to interview 25 first-generation Puerto Ricans and 36 second-generation Puerto Ricans; eventually, 65 taped oral histories and transcriptions were produced for an archive, although the line between the generations became less clear with increasing knowledge. Some program participants were interviewed about their participation in the study. Six of these evaluation interviews are included in Section I, the narrative report. Other sections of this final report present the following works produced by the project: (1) an interpretive report on housing, employment conditions, and intracity migration based on interview data and material from the literature; (2) a report on cultural dimensions of the migration; (3) an interview in Spanish with an elderly man; and (4) an epilogue paper on the oral history project by A. L. Galanes (Section V). Some of the text and selected interviews are provided in Spanish. (SLD)

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BATIENDO LA OLLA



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"stirring the pot"

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Taller Puertorriqueño, Inc.

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C R E D I T S

This report was compiled, written and produced by a variety of people.

Rick Hall selected and edited the materials, prepared the graphic lay-out, and printed the photographs for this edition. He also wrote the narrative sections on pp. 1-5, 33-37.

Marta Torres wrote the foreword, conducted the evaluation interviews, selected the excerpts for Section III: Cultural Dimensions of the Migration and typed most of the report.

William Santiago wrote the Introduction, pp. x-xii, and Section II: the Interpretive Report "Migration, Housing and Jobs".

Ivan Alicea interviewed Don Pedro Vasquez for Section IV.

Tomas Morton and Jerome Williams translated the conference paper by Dr. Adriana Galanes and Bonnie Masón typed both the English and Spanish final copy.

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EL QUE SABE ES EL QUE ESTA BATIENDO LA OLLA.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT'S IN THE POT EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO STIRS IT.¹

refrán puertorriqueño

a Puerto Rican saying

¹González, Néstor y América, .PUERTO RICO: NUESTRO PUEBLO HABLA--REFRANES--EXPRESIONES POPULARES, New York, Empresa González, 1975, p. 56.



BATIENDO LA OLLA ("STIRRING THE POT")

A Cross-Generational Comparison and Self-Study by
Second Generation Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia.

A Final Narrative Report to

YOUTHGRANTS IN THE HUMANITIES
National Endowment for the Humanities

Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc.
Julio A. Ruiz, Project Director
William Santiago, Project Co-Director
Marta Torres, Project Evaluator
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Foreword

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

- 1) it is bilingual which is inevitable, since we always have people that can communicate better in one language than another.
- 2) it is on-going - as long as there are Puerto Ricans traveling or migrating back and forth to the Island there will be new experiences to add to our oral history. Child rearing, language, housing, cultural traditions, education, employment are all affected by this continuous migration.
- 3) it was conducted by young Puerto Ricans considered as second generation but with such different backgrounds and experiences they could not be considered as one group. Some of them had lived so long in Puerto Rico that they had the same ideas as first generation Puerto Ricans.
- 4) it opened the door for future oral history and self-study projects. Most participants are now interviewing or planning to interview their own families.
- 5) it brought out the community problems - now for the first time in our community Puerto Ricans are having the opportunity to talk about their problems here in the United States but what is more important they are giving possible solutions for them.
- 6) it was not too late - fortunately for us, we were able to reach some of the very first people that came to this city before they went back to Puerto Rico or died.
- 7) it reached a wide range of people - we were able to talk to Puerto Ricans born and raised in the United States who had never been to Puerto Rico, and to Puerto Ricans that have just come from Puerto Rico for the very first time.

At first I thought that cross-generational meant the young learning from the old and the old learning from the young. Learning from or about? The young people learned from and about the older people they interviewed, but what did the older people learn? Maybe that they are important enough to make history, that we need their experiences to keep them alive and remind us where we have come from and help us decide where we are going.

The respect for older people is a vital part of our culture. We look up to them for advice, for a model to follow. When we find out all they have been through, all they have put up with, how their ambitions and aspirations have been replaced with helplessness and giving up, taking our place, recognizing how far we can go in this society, then, what happens with that respect? Do we feel proud of our ancestors, of our heritage, or do we feel they didn't do what we think should have been done? Do we feel that now it is on us to do it? How? How can we keep our culture when our family is being divided by migration, racism, social levels, differences of goals?

In the following report we have used a variety of ways to present the material. Julio Ruiz and William Santiago became very interested in housing, employment, and intra-city migration and produced an analytical discussion of these issues, an edited version of which is included below. I was more interested in selecting interview comments according to topics and developing profiles using only the actual words of the people interviewed.

Translation was another issue. With a few exceptions when the information was needed to clarify the discussion, we have presented excerpts from the interviews in the language in which they were recorded. All of us working on the project are bilingual and experience in both English and Spanish the richness of nuance, "salsa y sabor" which is often lost in translation. It is one of the paradoxes of our existence that being culturally advantaged by having access to two oral languages, many of us are "disadvantaged" by not being able to read and write our own native language. We had to choose between translating a few comments and presenting more material in the language in which it was originally spoken. We hope that our expediency prompted by lack of time, people and financial resources will be turned to benefit by providing motivation to both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers to learn to communicate and read in both languages. If you can't understand some parts of the interviews, sit down with someone who can and learn. It will broaden your access to the richness of two cultures.

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our appreciation to the following individuals who helped to make this project possible:

- to the 65 individuals, including project interviewers, who consented to be interviewed and gave of their time so that others could benefit from their life experiences.
- to the interviewers whose diligent work is reflected on the following pages: Abigail Ruiz, Diego Cruz, Ani Acevedo, Vivian Rodriguez, Ivan Alicea, Luis Hernandez, Pat Rippol and Isolina Reyes.
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- to Carmen Puigdollers, Taller's new executive director, who has supported and encouraged the editing of this final report.
- to Jerome Williams, Haverford College, and Thomas Morton, Temple University, for their assistance in translating Dra. Galanes' essay.
- to Bonnie and José Masón for their helpful revisions of the report and their persistence in assisting its completion.



INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A GENERATION?

During the months of February 1977 to December 1978, Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc. conducted an oral history project (O.H.P.) under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities (N.E.H.). The primary goal was a cross-generational comparison of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. The project was devised to train young "Boricuas" as perceptive human beings, sensitive to their total environment, especially their historical heritage. As participants of the project, we were willing to learn from everything.

Most of the participants of the O.H.P. were unfamiliar with the field of oral history, but had a desire to find out, in detail and first hand, what was going on in their community, and with their people. This preoccupation was the driving force behind the efforts undertaken. Interviewing both our peers (second generation Puerto Ricans) and our parents (first generation Puerto Ricans) seemed to provide an excellent avenue of information from the immediate environment. How is it that anywhere from 60,000 to 100,000 Puerto Ricans ended up in a North American ghetto? What was the total human experience of the process? Where were our people heading? These questions had to be answered.

The members of the program had similar backgrounds, yet a variety of concerns. We were all young Puerto Ricans in our late teens and early twenties. Most of us had spent time both in the United States and in Puerto Rico. To a large extent, we were all bilingual. A few were married and had children, (seeds of a third generation). On the whole, it was a group of people just beginning to understand that you had to push yourself hard in order to survive.

We confronted many obstacles at different levels. Organizationally, the task was all-encompassing, from using office space to keeping accounts straight. At times frustration would set in, so we talked about problems over and over. Why not try it this way or that way? If all should fail then to begin once more.

In the end, what did we do? Initially, we set out to interview 25 first generation Puerto Ricans and 36 second generation Puerto Ricans. Increasingly, the vagueness of the term "generation" became apparent and its usefulness in categorizing our interviews was questioned. Another distinction was introduced that was generated from our experience. Our oral histories could be grouped under: 1) those of people who had lived many years in the Puerto Rican community and hence were "core members" of the neighborhood and 2) those of people who had recently left other places in the United States (e.g. New York, Boston) to come to Philadelphia, or who had recently migrated directly from Puerto Rico to Philadelphia. The term generation, "core member" and recent migrant are crucial concepts and will be discussed more thoroughly below.

The interviews were to provide information and answers, but what we really found were more questions that focused on our struggle as a people. We tried to somehow handle a

mass of data; interview after interview everything became more intricate and difficult. We thirsted for insights, we asked our parents, our friends, our "leaders", and ourselves. We made our visits, we asked our questions about people's lives, and when we were finished we knew "lo poco que es el saber, sabe el hombre donde nace y no donde va a morir." ("how little is known men know where they were born, but don't know where they are going to die")

Sometimes it was upsetting because we knew people who had so much to offer, and were being neglected. We resisted the temptation to pass value judgements, but not the temptation to understand and be offended by the political, economic and social conditions of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. We had heard it in their own words, seen it in their gestures, and in their behavior. Discontent was everywhere. The O.H.P. participants had collected images of the past, present and future, digested it all, and felt somehow better after the bitter taste.

In our N.E.H. Youthgrants proposal for the oral history "Batiendo la Olla" it was stated that a chief problem in implementing a study of this sort is that of categorizing the data. Unlike quantified material, it is impossible to establish logic-tight or mutually exclusive categories. Throughout the months of the project, the participants tried to work with our principal construct of "generation". As time passed, it became apparent that we were trying to force our findings into first and second generation comparisons. The usefulness of this term to better understand our community was not as fruitful as had been expected.

What is a generation? Was a twenty year old Puerto Rican woman who had just come from the Island a first generation person? Her peers in the community who had been born or brought up in the neighborhood would be second generation Puerto Ricans within the context of the community's history and development. Yet, she shared values with the first generation of Philadelphia's Puerto Rican enclave since she had not assimilated much of anglo culture, and was more in tune with the traditional ways of the Island. What about someone who was born in Philadelphia, left to live on the Island at age two, returned to the city at ten, and four years later moved to Puerto Rico, to return years later married and with children?

Of the 57 people interviewed, 17 were clearly first generation, ranging in age from 37-77. Ten of these were over 50 years old. Twenty-five (25) second generation interviewees were identified ranging in age from 16-28. Another 16 individuals ranging in age from 23-32 were classified as neither first nor second generation either because they had migrated from Puerto Rico within the last 10 years or were teenagers or young adults when they migrated alone or with first generation parents. Recent migrants are first generation in terms of migration and cultural values, but socially and educationally tend to be more identified with the second generation. Those who migrated at an older age with their

parents are now often seen as part of the first generation, even though they may be second generation within the context of their own families.

Of course, one can define generation operationally. Age, years of residence on the island or Philadelphia, degree of assimilation to either culture (Puerto Rican or Anglo Saxon) and lifestyle could all serve as dimensions in some kind of generation continuum. But, the major concern in our project was to understand the development of the community on its own empirical base. What did the interviews point to as important categories? What were the tendencies within the growth process of the neighborhood? The notion that the community is changing and is not static, is very important in our self-study. Somehow it had slipped by us that we were looking at things that are changing, that are in movement. We became aware of the fact that we had to pinpoint the catharsis of change in our community.

The migration itself is the source of change. Although the conditions of the migration are different, it still continues in less magnitude. Apparently, those that migrate today fall into two groups: 1) migrant farm workers that are seasonal workers, and 2) A brain drain. Many educated Puerto Ricans are abandoning the island looking for higher wages and a higher standard of living. It should be kept in mind that since 1970 there has been a net return to the Island, so that there are more people returning to the island than leaving it.

Since there still are Puerto Ricans coming to Philadelphia, the community is constantly being revived with recent migrants. There is a core group of people that have remained for years in the city. This center has identified Philadelphia as their home. On the other hand, there is a group of individuals that form the periphery of the community. They travel extensively from the island to the United States, and do not necessarily have a stake in the community. To contrast these two groups in terms of lifestyle, cultural standards, food habits, and schooling etc. would entail differentiating the island's value system and Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community normative order. The usefulness of the construct "generation" is questionable in that, it does not help grasp the dynamics of a developing migration community. A more accurate approach is to discuss what the core center group and periphery have in common.

When these two groups are compared they share two principal concerns 1) housing and 2) jobs. These topics are discussed extensively below because they were recurring areas mentioned by interviewees. Also presented below are comments from the interviews on Life in Puerto Rico, Leaving the Island/Arriving in the United States, the beginnings of the Philadelphia Puerto Rican community, intra-city migration, cultural values, language, religion, identity, discrimination and conflict and the return migration to Puerto Rico.

SECTION I: NARRATIVE REPORT



PROJECT
ACTIVITIES:

"BATIENDO LA OLLA",* the Oral History Project of Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc. encompasses a two and a half year period of activities. Based on pilot efforts during the bi-centennial year funded by Phila '76, Inc. and the Fels Fund, activities continued from October 1976-December 1978 as a YOUTHGRANTS project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and as part of a community conference series funded by the Public Committee for the Humanities in Pennsylvania. Companion photography projects funded by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Weiner and Douty Foundations helped to document the efforts.

Originally the project sought to document the Puerto Rican migration to the Philadelphia area, compare generational values and life experiences and provide an opportunity for self-study by young second-generation Puerto Ricans. An archive of taped oral histories and transcriptions would be produced and materials would be published and disseminated via exhibits and workshops to stimulate community awareness of its own history, and the use, by students, teachers, and community individuals of oral history and photography as tools for self study.

Brief
summary

More than 100 individuals eventually participated in project activities including interviewers, interviewees, transcribers, typists, advisors, consultants and another 250 attended symposia and exhibits. Sixty-five taped oral histories and transcriptions were produced, 30 of which became part of a state-wide archive on ethnic minorities. Draft project reports include an interpretive study of housing, employment and migration; a "how to do it manual"; excerpts from the interviews; photographs; and interviewer evaluation summaries. Final editing and publication are still in progress.

Leadership

The project was coordinated by two young students of the Puerto Rican experience acting as co-directors. Julio A. Ruiz, 28, received a G.E.D. diploma and a B.A. in Latin American History from Temple University where he worked as a peer counselor and program coordinator in Upward Bound programs for disadvantaged youth. Concurrent with the oral history project he worked as a bilingual teacher at Graterford Correctional Institution. William Santiago, 22, received his B.A. in Anthropology and Sociology from

*The project title, "Stirring the Pot," comes from a Puerto Rican folk saying, "El que sabe, es el que esta batiendo la olla," which means "No one knows what's in the pot except the one who is stirring it."

Haverford College utilizing, in part, his experiences with the project as the basis for a senior project. Continuing graduate studies at the University of Chicago, he maintained contact with the project, traveling to Philadelphia on three occasions for project evaluations and the June 1978 conference. After October 1977, Marta Torres assumed the task of completing transcriptions, editing interview comments, conducting evaluation interviews and oral histories with the project interviewers. Marta, a twenty seven year old mother of five has worked as a community newspaper editor, child-care worker, and as secretary and administrative assistant at Taller Puertorriqueño, Inc. Currently, she free-lances from her home and hopes to participate in developing a proposal for an on-going oral history project.

Selection and Orientation of Interviewers

William Santiago joined the summer 1976 pilot project in time to inherit the task of evaluating the materials and share some of the pilot project interviewers experience. This period served as on the job training and William assisted in the identification and selection of co-director Julio Ruiz. The period from Oct. 1977 to January 1978 served as orientation period for the co-directors during which they recruited additional interviewers, revised the interview questionnaires, made contacts with resource organizations and individuals and planned a revised orientation schedule for prospective interviewers. As people volunteered to work with the project, they became part of this planning process. Because of a compressed project schedule, training sessions were more limited than originally planned and conducted largely by project staff. In addition to the symposium described below, project members attended a lecture by Puerto Rican historian Dra. Loida Figueroa. Temple University professors Dr. William Yancey and Dr. Jacob Gruber visited the project and offered the following suggestions:

a) to interview people in their own habitat, a place which is familiar to them, in order to provide a more informal atmosphere, b) to concentrate on details and to go beyond general statements from interviewees, and c) to edit some sections of the transcripts. Additional suggestions in the form of interview questionnaires were provided by Carl Oblinger and Dr. John Bodner of the Pa. Historical and Museum Commission. Criteria for selection of interviewers, the orientation schedule, and the interview procedures developed are included as appendices. Solicitations at a community symposium, an article in community newspapers, a traveling exhibit, contacts with community agencies and student organizations and a

word-of-mouth network of family, friends and members of Taller Puertorriqueño, provided a pool of interviewers and interviewees.

Community Symposium

The project was inaugurated with a community symposium in late January 1977. Dr. Arthur Schmidt, Temple University professor of Latin American History presented an overview of Puerto Rico's history emphasizing the relationship with the United States, which has resulted in the migration of 1/3 of the island's population to the mainland. Antonia Coss, a Puerto Rican junior high school Spanish teacher and doctoral candidate at Temple University, presented a paper prepared by Dr. Adriana Galanes, then chairperson of Temple's Department of Spanish and Portuguese, calling for a human history, going beyond dates; population statistics, political events.

"Juan Pueblo, as eyewitness or participant in the happenings which later become history, requests that his life, sometimes converted by erudition into lifeless letters on a page, be made instead an active testimony."¹

Dra. Galanes, drawing on political and economic history, ethnography, literature and folklore emphasized the rich and varied forms of oral literature, personal experience and cultural expression which constitute the unwritten history of the Puerto Rican people.

These then helped to form a basis for the oral history project: the historical context of the migration and the oral tradition in Puerto Rican culture recording the experience of ordinary individuals as they live their lives thereby making history.

RESULTS:

100 active
participants

Ten interviewers recorded from 2-12 interviews each. Another five interviewers recorded one interview each. Each interviewer participated in transcribing, but help was needed and another 7 individuals participated as transcribers. In total, 22 young adults collected and transcribed interviews from 57 individuals, aged 16-77, who contributed their own life histories. Twenty additional persons functioned as advisors and consultants, bringing the total participation near 100 individuals. Another 250 people attended the symposium, exhibits, and a June 1978 conference.

Evaluation Interviews

Project participants also recorded 8 oral histories from each other and a participant/evaluator completed project evaluation interviews with 7 of the interviewers. These are discussed under "Impact" and "Problems."

¹See Section V: Oral History Conference Paper p.77

Interpretive
Report
Drafts

During September 1977-February 1978 a draft of an interpretive project report emphasizing housing, employment conditions and intra-city migration was prepared by the project co-directors based on interview data and material compiled from the literature. A draft "how-to-do-it" manual was also prepared based on the experiences of the project.

Summary
report

A brief summary report was prepared which included photographs and excerpts from the interviews grouped according to the following topics: life in Puerto Rico, leaving the island, arriving in the United States, the beginnings of the hispanic colony in Philadelphia, housing, culture, religion, discrimination, employment, identity, and return to Puerto Rico. A summary of the evaluation interviews included "why people participated in the project and what indeed they had learned." (see "Impact")

IMPACT:

The project generated a variety of cooperative follow-up activities including the Oral History and Photography Conference reported in the section on dissemination. Most of the interviewers are recording their own family histories and have expressed willingness to continue the project, adding interviews needed to complement the growing history of the Philadelphia community. Among the spin-off results and activities are the following:

State-wide
archive

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission granted \$1,000 for contributions to a state wide archive on ethnic minorities. Duplicate tapes and transcripts of 30 oral history interviews were submitted to the William Penn Memorial Museum in Harrisburg, Pa. to fulfill this grant agreement.

Documentary
Photography

During the summer of 1977, members of the Summer Photography Project, funded by the Pa. Council on the Arts, cooperated with the interviewers to document project activities. 50 photos were produced and added to the mini-archive of photographs produced in the 1976 exhibit project.

3 Versions
of a
folktale

A short essay entitled "Un Cuento en la tradicion oral de Puerto Rico" (A Story in the Oral Tradition of Puerto Rico) was written by William Santiago, based on versions of a popular folktale recorded in Puerto Rico and in Philadelphia. The paper notes that while the story probably is of European origin it has been given its present form by Puerto Rican migrants to Philadelphia and that it has acquired new elements as a result of experiences on the island and in the migration process. The essay discusses the nature of "folklore" and what function the story plays in the social setting.

The story "La Fragata de los Perros" deals with violation of the sanctity of the social-religious institution of "compadrazco" the relationship of parents and godparents and children--a custom which is still strongly maintained among families in Philadelphia.

Migration
Consortium
Proposal

To further investigate the intra-city migration observed and documented in the oral histories interviews, a proposal entitled, "Recycled Neighborhoods" was developed and submitted to the Puerto Rican Migration Consortium for a case study to be carried out by the project co-directors. The proposal was not funded, but could provide the basis for a future project.

Impact
on the
Interviewers

In lieu of final autobiographies participants were asked to evaluate the Oral History Project. Marta Torres interviewed the interviewers after the work had come to an end.¹ From these conversations it was clear that the members of the interviewing team had been influenced by their involvement in the project. It was for them a process of learning and self-study, as well as an attempt to document the life of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia.

The statements on the following pages are excerpted from the evaluation interviews with only minor editing. The individuals represented, 3 young women and 3 young men including the project co-directors, speak about the process of discovery and self-exploration in which they found themselves while ostensibly involved in interviewing others about their lives. In their own words they tell why they participated in the project and what indeed they learned.

¹ Vivian Rodriguez interviewed Marta Torres.





Transition
from
pilot project

I was
co-director

I was an interviewer in the Pilot Project. At the end of August of 1976 everyone that was on the Pilot Project was going back to school, or leaving the city so they needed someone to make the link and someone to implement the money that was going to come from N.E.H., to help get it started, the planning and the training of the interviewers. So from August to December I was organizing the training, finishing and analyzing the Pilot Project and starting a system of how to store the tapes. I also was trying to find a director for the project and in December we hired Julio Ruiz. When the money came in in January I was first to train the interviewers, giving them a two-week training session to teach them everything we knew about Oral History and about interviewing, about Puerto Rico history and about Puerto Ricans in United States. Then I was to become an interviewer but also to supervise the other interviewers in terms of what kind of work they were bringing in, if it was bad, if it was good, what they were doing wrong, what they were doing right. Julio was the director in a sense that he supervised the funds and projected for the future, "What we are going to do next?", what we were doing at the time was my work. That's what ended up being my job relationship in terms of Julio. He was director and I was co-director, helping him out. So even though I was an interviewer I was also co-director of the project.

purchasing ice
was an event...

"What am I,
Puerto Rican,
American...
or Black?"

Initially I wanted to talk to old people, but then I saw, when I was talking to them, that a lot of stuff they were telling me I already had my ideas about. Their telling me what has happened was good because it gave me the human aspect of it, what it really was like to live there, to see the first TV, to go and get water in the rivers, and when you didn't have a refrigerator and when the purchasing of ice was an event because you rarely had ice, that was good to know, but a lot they were telling me I kind of knew, especially about the history, political history I knew a lot about. I didn't know anything about living, being a Puerto Rican in the United States and living in a Puerto Rican neighborhood like the one in Philadelphia. So I switched interests. I was interested in what was like to live here, going to school, bilingual education, and what it was to have racial tension, to go to a place and they wouldn't rent it to you because you were Puerto Rican, what it was to always have to be asking yourself "what am I, Puerto Rican, American or am I Black?" I noticed that a lot of Puerto Ricans would rather say that they were Black than Puerto Rican so I started to say "Why?" I tried to understand what was it that made Puerto Ricans say that they were Black rather than Puerto Rican, even if their skin was black, what made them, culturally, act, they took a lot of the ways of the Black people, the Black consciousness. So that really shocked me. I wondered, "What is going on?"

Wherever I go
I am
Puerto Rican

I could see at the beginning, when I would talk to people my age that they were distant from me. Like "He is Puerto Rican but he is not really like me." I could tell, maybe because I talk the way I talk or maybe because I just had different experiences I could tell that they weren't being honest with me right away. They weren't sure about me.

I told people at Taller, "You people aren't sure about me and the way you are dealing with me, is that you are treating me like a child." I felt people were treating me like a naive child, that I haven't gone through all this so I didn't really know what it was about. That bothered me a whole lot, because I am not a person to be patronized. That's why I was asking because I didn't go through it. I dealt with it that way, "I didn't go through that but I think that I can still relate because I am Puerto Rican in New Jersey, in Philadelphia, wherever I go I am Puerto Rican, it doesn't matter."

here to stay

I changed a whole lot. First of all it hit me that Puerto Ricans in this country are not going to return. A lot of them are here to stay and they are going to have to develop their own identity. Before, I was naive enough to think that they were going to return or that they were Puerto Ricans... I never doubted that Puerto Ricans born and raised in the United States say that they are Puerto Ricans, but I thought that they were different and that had some kind of negative connotation to it in the sense that... Puerto Ricans on the island talk bad about the Puerto Ricans here "esos no son puertorriqueños de verdad, ellos no son puertorriqueños, ellos son afro-americanos in their ways." [They are not true Puerto Ricans...they are afro-americans...]"

they are not
Puerto Ricans

You walk down the streets in Philadelphia, it is constantly in your mind that you are Puerto Rican, you are constantly reminded of it, you cannot forget it. That's how people respond to you, as a Puerto Rican. They look at you and the first thing that comes out is "you are a Puerto Rican woman" but the first thing that they say is that "you are Puerto Rican". In Puerto Rico that doesn't happen. If you are from there, well, everybody is Puerto Rican. It suddenly hit me that that's why Puerto Ricans here are different, because they were constantly reminded of the fact that they were going to keep being Puerto Rican and having to face the negative consequences discrimination, racism, stereotyping or were they going to deny it and try to pass.

You are
Nuyorican,
right?

In Puerto Rico people considered me Nuyorican because I had lived in the States. I had never lived in New York. I lived in Georgia, but when I went to Puerto Rico and I knew English, people would say "You are Nuyorican, right?" and I would say "Well, I never lived in New York, but I lived in the States." So in Puerto Rico I was considered Nuyorican and I came over here and I was considered from the island. I wasn't accepted over there and I wasn't accepted over here. That's what really bothered me a lot afterwards, when I was telling you about how people were treating me. It sort of hit me here and I am not Nuyorican."

the colonial
mentality

I consider myself Puerto Rican. I mean, like I said, I am Puerto Rican in New Jersey, the island, I am Puerto Rican. Right now I am feeling more comfortable with people that grew up in the United States. Just because they feel the same way ... about white people. People in Puerto Rico tend to be more, "tu sabes, la mentalidad colonial" look up to Americans, and I don't at all. I mean I don't owe them anything.

"Where are
you from?"

How do people treat me? Nuyorican, they definitely say that I am Nuyorican, but, "si yo hablo español, como yo hablo español bien" and I really don't have an accent that much I can pass. But when people ask me "Where are you from?" lately I have been saying I am from Philadelphia. Like in Chicago, if people ask me "Where from was I" "From Philadelphia". That's what I tell them. Because if I tell them that I am from Puerto Rico, like if it is a Black person and I told "I am from Puerto Rico" they say "Well, I am from Africa, where are you from, you know?" "I know your roots are there, but where are you from?"

From the people that you interviewed, did you find anybody who was feeling the same way you felt?

you don't have
to think
about it...

Well, Vicente was the most open person about it, when you talked about it. He was the one that pointed it out to me, he pointed it out to me in the sense that he said, "Look man, you walk down the streets in Puerto Rico you don't have to think about the fact that you are Puerto Rican" and it hit me that it was very true, that I never had to consider it. It was here

he cannot say "white people" in Puerto Rico that I had to consider it, every time, because everybody "Where are you from?" The first thing they do is "Where are you from?" He went through that. He has pretty much dealt with it. He realized that there was a difference and he has gone through it. I am sure that other people have. Especially people about my age. Ivan is a person that went through it. He was very much island. You talk to him today, he is not very much. He still, definitely "el te dice: I am going back to Puerto Rico, there is no way I can live with these people here" "these people" meaning "these white people" right? "I don't want to have anything to do with them", but I know that he is going to go back and he is going to feel the tension with Puerto Ricans. Because he cannot say "white people" in Puerto Rico, they are going to look at him and say "and what are you? do you mean you are not white?"

what it means to work in an organization As a co-director I learned what it means to work in an organization, a bureaucracy from the phone being busy when you most need it to being on time in the morning, how the day works, how the day develops, how you can waste time a lot when you are not in the mood, and the days that you don't have a second of time to lose because there is a deadline to meet. So I learned how to get things done. I learned that you cannot be sure that it is going to be done if you are not there constantly. If somebody else is going to do it for you, you have to be on their necks all the time, in a nice way you have to "mira, hiciste esto, no lo has hecho? pero lo vas a hacer? pero no me mientas, si no lo puedes hacer dímelo que yo lo hago, pero no me digas que lo vas a hacer y después no lo hagas."

I learned a lot about interviewing In terms of oral history I learned a lot about interviewing, how to get people relaxed when you are interviewing, how to follow up... Just by doing it. The mistakes I made on my first interview I would try not to make on my second, the mistakes I made on my first and second I would try not to make in my third. I tried different techniques, in one interview I tried to follow the questionnaire, I never used it, but I had a little card where I had printed topics that I wanted to cover. It didn't work because people ended up talking about whatever they wanted to talk about, whatever their mood was that day. The best interviews are with people that are relaxed, have nothing on their mind except that they are in the mood to talk, because then they will talk about anything, anything you mention it will get them going. The second thing I tried to do was, I let the person talk and whatever they brought up I would follow through to the end. Like if I am talking to you, and you are talking about religion and you are telling me something about religion and how one day you went to a "botanica", I would let you finish what you are saying about religion and then I would say "What about the botanica that you just mentioned?" Let's say during the new conversation about "botanica" you mentioned a great grandfather that was in the Spanish-American War, well I would even follow that adventure, but if you didn't bring anything up I would just find something else to talk about, some of one of the topics that I wanted to cover. So I learned about interviewing. Another way I tried to interview was following chronologically, like "Where did you first go to school?"...in other words, I would follow your history. That, I think was one of the better techniques. It is better afterwards, when you want to look at the interview, that's a way to organize the material. The other ways are more natural and informative because people are more relaxed talking, but they are more difficult to read and understand.

Do you feel now any closer to the community, after you worked in the project? To the Philadelphia community specifically?

Yes. I feel like I know the community, ... people can tell me I am not from here but ... I know more about this

I got
involved

community than people that have lived here all their lives. Especially the summer of 1977, I lived in West Philly but I spent 24 hours a day here and I got involved in almost every single organization in the community, Community Legal Services, Aspira, Concilio, a lot of things were going on that summer, they shot José Reyes and I was in all those things. I also was able to dedicate a lot of time to Taller in general, like membership, Roy Brown Concert, the Film Festival, giras, it was an amazing summer. I was completely immersed in Philadelphia.

Puerto Rican
here and in
Puerto Rico

OK. I learned about oral history, and about organizing a project like this, but I also learned a lot about the difference between being a Puerto Rican here and what it means to be Puerto Rican in Puerto Rico and the relationship between the two. The migration is going on today, talk to any Puerto Rican either they have lived in the United States or a really close relative has. Either your father has been here or your mother, your brother or you have and you know that these people exist here. Then if you go to Puerto Rico and look at TV, those shows are filmed in New York, you go to New York, you find shows filmed in Puerto Rico. There is a direct link between the two communities. You sort of know those things, but when you are here and you see them first hand you know how important they are. Like Maldonado¹ was saying yesterday that Puerto Ricans are not going to assimilate, I don't think that they are going to assimilate either, do you know why? Because the minute you are assimilating you go back to Puerto Rico and re-inforce everything that is Puerto Rican, "el idioma, la cultura"...you are bombarded with it constantly in Puerto Rico. Then you come here and are bombarded with the mass media here, so that influences you. If you keep an equilibrium and you keep coming back "lo de puertorriqueño se te sube a la mente rápido" [the "Puerto Rican" in you quickly comes to mind].... I knew Puerto Ricans that were wealthy and were better off, weren't working class, but they were middle class or moving on up. They are less "Puerto Rican" than Puerto Ricans that have been born and brought up all their lives in the United States. They are more pro-americanos, they look up more to Americans. I am talking about the wealthy Puerto Ricans, they envy more their status, Puerto Ricans here don't envy that, they know what's coming down, they don't have to envy anybody.

"Puerto
Ricans are
not going to
assimilate"

They don't
have to
envy
anybody.

It changed
my life.

I began to realize that what I was going to learn in school was going to be good in a sense that I was thinking a lot, I always thought a lot. What I learned in school was to think, basically. Not what to think, but to think. What to think I had not learned and I was going to have to learn that in the real world. I knew how to think, what, is what I learned.... I knew when I left Taller to go back to school, I said "This has been an experience that really completely shifted my life"...an experience that I was really fortunate to have at my age, to work on a project of this magnitude. It is something I was really interested in, so I was very fortunate. It changed my life in the sense that I know what I want to do now, I want to try to organize.

¹ Manuel Maldonado Denis, Puerto Rican author and social historian lecturing at Haverford College, April 1978.

I am not necessarily going back.

I see that my plans are different in the sense that I don't necessarily want to go back to Puerto Rico, that I can live in the United States and be more helpful than I would ever be in Puerto Rico. I can do more in the United States for Puerto Ricans than I could do for Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. They have changed in the sense that I feel that what I am studying now isn't very practical, it's only something I am doing for my own good but I want to do something, I want to learn a trade that would help people directly, like law, so I may go to law school. I feel I am more needed here. Yes, definitely that's the major change, that I am not necessarily going to go back, that I won't feel bad if I don't.... In fact, when I say organizing, what I mean is nation-wise, there are a lot of Puerto Ricans in this country and they are not organized nationally.

I have to understand things for myself.

If I had a project that I could do on my own I would like to do it on the migrant workers in New Jersey. I would like to know exactly what the contracts say, how much of what the contracts say is being done. I would like to know it for my own benefit and to the extent that I can use it, other people can use this in the courts, and the government can use it. I knew Puerto Ricans were being discriminated against and that as a consequence there were ghettos, and I knew that in the ghettos people were having poor education, poor housing, etc., I knew all that. I may have read it in the paper one day, it wasn't part of my life. Now it is so much part of it. It is not like something I read in the paper, I know what is going on.

Right now in my life I am trying to do a lot of things just because I am interested in them, there may be no practical reason. You see, I don't have a lot of power at this time, to influence what happens..., but right now I have to understand things for myself.

It makes people think about their lives.

A lot of people at the beginning were very cold and reserved and didn't want to talk too much. After ten minutes they were more open and they were talking. About twenty minutes after entering the interview they would start reflecting on and becoming philosophical about their lives. They'd say "que mucho yo he pasado" and it hit them that they had lived these many years and had gone through all these things. The interview had made them review their lives, made them re-think what they had gone through and what they were doing now and what they were going to do in the future. So it was like a self-study for them, like therapeutic, it was as if I was the therapist and they were telling me all their problems. It makes people think about their lives. That was the affect that it had both in the people that were interviewed and the interviewer.



to get
involved in
the community

One of my reasons to participate in the project was to take a more active part in the community. My main interest was to collect and preserve the history of the community, especially of the Puerto Rican members of our community here in Philadelphia. I had just completed my undergraduate education at Temple University and I was wondering what to do next, how to get involved in the community. I was also working as a teacher at Graterford Prison and I was counseling collecting information or data there. I was directing all aspects of the project. I consider everyone that worked on the project as director because we were all new at it, myself, Pucho and all the other participants. This was the first time we had ever done anything like this. We didn't know what to do, how to contribute, or what to expect in return. What we did know was that we wanted to preserve the history of our community and that's what we set out to do.

we were
all new

the interview
belongs to the
the community
and to the
individual

I interviewed, transcribed and participated in all the aspects of the project. Mainly, I was out trying to solicit interviews from people, trying to get people to participate by contributing information, their biographies or their oral histories. I have done other interviews, not only for the project, on my own. For instance, at the prison I have done quite a few interviews and others with people that have heard about the project and have called me up wanting me to interview them. One of the arrangements that I made with the people that I interviewed is that this is their interview, all that I am doing is preserving it. Anytime they or a member of their family would like to have this interview they can have it. It is not mine, it belongs to the community in general and to the individual in particular.

we became
aware

One of the things that happened to me, and I am sure to a lot of the people that participated in the project is that by using these tapes, listening to them over and over again we became aware of the situation here in the community. We have a very critical situation and there are many problems that have to be dealt with right now and I think that the interviews should be used for that. I would have them turned over to someone who would listen to the problems that are there and maybe correct some of the situations.

the project
opened my
eyes

To be realistic I don't think that I am prepared to do anything with them because one of the things that I am very critical of at this point is the education that most of us receive and by myself I could do very little with them, except hear them and transmit them verbally to other people. I am not prepared to write a book or an essay or any critical analysis about the tapes or the information in the tapes. I just don't want a literary project. I would like for these interviews to be used to make people more aware of the situation, all people, Blacks, Whites, and other non-Puerto Ricans. The project has opened my eyes, it has made me sensitive enough to deal with the situation.

a gain we
didn't
expect

The project accomplished what it was supposed to and much more. I am much more aware today of the problems that we face here in Philadelphia. Pucho is not a native of the Mainland, and he is a lot more aware of the problems that we face here in Philadelphia than he was when he arrived. That in itself is a gain that we didn't expect. At the beginning I didn't expect to get anything out of it except the experience and something to show in my Resume, but I have benefited from it and I think that everyone else in the project did benefit from it.

There should be a priority set older people because they are not going to be here that long and they have gone through an experience that we will never go through again. We might go through it, but if we didn't hear

priority on
older people

it from them we are not going to know about it. In the beginning one of purposes was to study the community, to see where we are coming from and where we are going. If we don't interview the older people and get their story, and I don't mean just a one hour interview, we are not going to get a complete picture of what the community went through and what it is going through.

the young...no
philosophy...
no outlet for
their ideas

The old people will benefit but the young people will benefit a lot more than they will contribute. They will benefit by the fact that they will become aware of their problems. A lot of our young people have no philosophy, for one thing, and they don't have a podium, they don't have an outlet for their ideas. There is no place in our community where a group of concerned young people can get together and talk, I mean really talk about the problems. There is no place in this community where they can really sit down and rap to somebody. Why? Because there is too much drug use in the community, there is too much poverty. They are preoccupied with so much. The Oral History Project gives them that opportunity, and they know it.

we will see
the beauty in
their minds

They start to relate to the project and they know that they are part of it because they have contributed. The young people will benefit in that way. They will develop an identity, at least with the project, with the fact that they have contributed something. They will start to develop their ideas because if they keep these ideas shut up inside of them they are not going to mature. These young people need to speak their minds. Their minds will become cultivated, will grow, and we will see the beauty in their minds. Most of our youth, the only way they can express themselves is verbally, so this is our job to catch it and cultivate it. The problems that our youth are facing today are not the same problems that our parents faced, so we can't just interview the older people. A lot of our young people are facing problems today that the older people are just beginning to face, take for example the penal system.



new trend in
migration

I also interviewed young Puerto Ricans that were coming over directly from the Island by themselves. There is a new trend in migration. When your parents and my parents migrated, they migrated with their whole family, that is not happening now. Do you know who is migrating from Puerto Rico now? The intellectual, the well-educated people and young people who are dropping out of school and cannot find jobs are migrating to the States. So that's a new type of problem. You have a lot of young people around here without parents and they create problems, they neither have the training, the education or the opportunity. Most of the young people that are coming from the Island don't know what the system is all about. They come in and they are blind as hell and deal with the system the best way they know how.

I am a much
better person

How do I feel now after having worked on the project, personally? I myself am a much better person. I don't think that's totally due to the project itself, but my whole life orientation. I am contributing to the community simply by staying here and fighting. Anybody that stays here in this community will have to fight. As long as I stay in this community and I carry on the history of the community, let people know what the community is, where the community has been, where it is going I will be an asset to the community just like anyone else.

...tip of
the iceberg

This project or another project can be done. I am willing to do another project without money, without pay. I am collecting data on my own, I can do it, it can be done. But, what is going to happen to this information?... I think it should be processed, it should be stored and it should be considered as the beginning. We haven't even touched the tip of the iceberg. I mean, there is a lot more. I believe that we have close to 100,000 to 150,000 Puerto Ricans in this area and we have only interviewed 60 or 63 interviewees or less. That is not even 1%.

...an
identification

We have to hear what these people have to say. By recording and talking to the people we are going to get them involved. Everytime you mention the Oral History Project people are going to look, they are going to read, they are going to listen, to look for their names or their family's name or their experience. Already there is an identification starting to develop and that is important.

I
contribute

I don't only solicit, I also contribute information. I let them know what is going on in the community, I let them know what I think the community should do, where I think the community is going. This should be the job of every interviewer. The interviewer should take this opportunity to orient or to give everybody else a little bit of information on what's happening in the community. If I come to your house and I interview you and I don't leave you a little more enlightened than when I came in I haven't done a darned thing for you, I haven't done a darned thing for the community, and if I haven't done a darned thing for the community I haven't done a darned thing for myself.



Ani Acevedo, was raised in Philadelphia, attended public and parochial schools and was the first Philadelphia Puerto Rican to graduate from Moore College of Art. Active in community cultural activities the project rekindled her interest in her own family history. Her interviews with older people and her association with fellow project members helped her learn to communicate better and to appreciate the diversity within the Puerto Rican people--and ultimately influenced her decision to go to live in Puerto Rico, to reestablish her roots.

how they
grew up

I have always been interested in my family's background. Since I can remember I have been asking my mother and my father questions about, what did they do when they were little, what was their great-grandmother's name or great-grandfather's name, how did the school look where they went, did they have to travel far to go to school? That kind of thing. What did they do with their spare time because I know that at that time when they were young they didn't have television and a lot of families were poor and they could not even afford a radio. Just background information on Puerto Ricans. I figured that sometimes you learn a lot on finding out information on how your immediate family like your parents, how they grew up and the things they had to go through. It kind of always fascinated me and I figured right here I get a chance to find out about my parents, to find out about other people to see if there are similarities.

learning to
communicate

I thought that maybe because I was raised here in this country and my Spanish isn't up to par, I thought that maybe I would find it difficult or feel self-conscious so I couldn't really speak to them well in Spanish, but I found out that that wasn't a problem and they were really nice, when I would pronounce a word incorrectly they would correct me.... Of the people who actually work with the project and were interviewers themselves I only interviewed two. I think that the information they gave me just kind of helped bring the picture of them that I had in mind more to perspective because I got to know more about them and especially when you find out about their families, their background, it just kind of helps you get to understand people. What I got out of it was getting to meet a lot of people, my co-workers, people that I really like and I think that I learned from them. I got a better sense of learning how to communicate with people and talking to people and being friendly with people the people I speak of are mainly my co-workers, I think that most of the people working on the project have been really interesting people to work with and I like them all.

it's for
our people

There are several people that I know, family members that I would have liked to have interviewed. I approached these people and explained to them about the project but they are really timid people. They are shy and they are afraid of anything having to do with tape recording their voices or anything like that even when you explain everything to them. I explained the whole project inside out and I had interviewed a friend of this person and the friend came with me and explained "It is a good project, it is for the benefit of our people in the long run," but still I guess I wasn't convincing enough. I could not interview this one person. I would have liked to do more actual interviews.

I don't have
that much
"confianza"

I think out of respect maybe, because I don't have that much confidence in the person, [I don't know the person well enough], I would not have gone out and asked some of the interview questions. A family member from the same area on the island my father is from visits our home and when they sit down and talk, a lot of things that happened to them when they grew up come out. That's why I thought the person would be interesting to interview.

So, you wouldn't ask them questions on your own if it wasn't for the project?

I think that in a certain situation maybe, but to a person that is a lot older than I am, I think that in a given situation if I would ask a question the person would answer me, honestly, but other than that I guess not.

the method
is good

I think that the whole method or the whole system that we are using for the Oral History Project is good and I made certain notes on it, I think this is a good way of going out to the people and getting information in case you need to do any kind of study, research of anything. I think that if I ever plan to do a project or something I would consider this method.

oral history
of Puerto
Rican
artists

"santeria...
espiritismo"

I would like to do like an in depth Oral History study on Puerto Rican artists, whether it is here in the Philadelphia community or in Puerto Rico, or maybe the two, to compare the struggles of artists here and in Puerto Rico, and how are they accepted here or on the island. And by artists I mean professional and non-professional artists, young people, old people. I would like to be able to do an in-depth study in "Santeria" and spiritualism and the different religions of the people, that really fascinated me. I was really surprised with this information that one person had to give me on "espiritismo" and religion. Oddly enough people tend to combine them too, the extra-sensory power that they may have with religion for some people it is even a way of life.

we are a
diverse
people

It has just given me an insight into Puerto Rican people that like any other group of people, even though we are one ethnic group we are really diverse people. I found out why different people think differently, why if a person is born and raised here in the states why they think in a certain way, as opposed to someone who came over from the island and had grown up and studied on the island, why their points of view might be different or why they might even be alike.

I knew there was a difference between a Puerto Rican from here, from the United States and from the island but I didn't know specifically what things, what points made them different or made them alike, and in some of the tapes that I have done certain actual facts, information came up which tells the difference.

I guess after the project gets re-evaluated and the project gets started over again and is better organized and we have people who decide to stay with the project right from the beginning, maybe the impact of the information gotten will affect the actual interviewers, the people involved in the project a lot more. I feel like this was a second part of the project.

Yes, I think it is a really worthwhile project. Something like this is needed, I think it is a real smart idea to actually do this project. what we are doing is watching out for our own offspring because sooner or later we are going to need information on us. There is a lot that is happening in the Puerto Rican community now and has happened that I know has kind of run through our fingers nothing has been kind of documented or recorded.

We were going to compile the final report or evaluation, in some type of book form or pamphlet form and I was supposed to design the cover for it and I had gathered some photographs. I had some old photographs of the Puerto Rican people here, when they first arrived here in the Philadelphia area and even some from the island. We were going to do something like a pictorial say and incorporate that with the evaluation and

that was never done. My hands were kind of tied because what I was supposed to do was gather the information and make a layout of the design. But the person who was supposed to go out and have these photographs copied and everything wasn't around or never did it. A good presentation of the project I think is really important.

to learn
the things
I didn't
learn

I am going to be going to Puerto Rico, I am planning to stay there to live. I am going to be working as a cloth designer, finally I am getting into my field. One of the reasons I wanted to make a move to go to the island and live is, I think maybe the Oral History Project in a way has something to do with it, I feel that I need to go back to the island and learn over again the things that I un-learned for the first time, the things I didn't learn when I was living here because this is an American country it is an American society.

I'm going to
live with my
grandparents.

I was raised here and there is a lot lacking and I feel that I need to go back, even to get to understand my parents better. I am going to go back and live with my grandparents and I am going to be asking them questions. I plan to interview them and, just for my own sake, for my own family history get information about how my parents grew when they were young and the things they had to go through, the things that their parents had to go through.

...my own
experience

I kind of would like to start new, in a new environment and everything. I know that there would probably be certain things that would seem strange to me and I may not agree with because again I was raised here and the society here is a little more liberal than it is on the island. There will probably be struggles that I would have to go through, I just want to experience life, get to know more about life for my own experience.

I figured that I am young now, do it now before I start growing any roots in any one place and decide that there is where I want to stay for the rest of my life. I figure that I don't have any ties at this point and this would be the best time to do it.

being brought
up here had
a great
impact on me

Yes, as far as I can see I plan to stay there to live. I don't doubt that in the future, maybe, I might come back here. I am not saying come back to live permanently, but maybe live here for a couple more years. The thing is living here in this country and being brought up here had a great impact on me and by going to Puerto Rico I am not turning my back on that because I can't. I am going to carry it with me wherever I go and I know that sooner or later I am going to have to come back, to come home.

My father wants to go, my mother would really prefer to stay here. I guess because she has her own house here and she has a job and a community of friends and everything and that's important to people, to anyone, but especially people their age. Once you set roots in a certain place you kind of want to stay there.



Vivian Rodriguez, a special education teacher and graduate student at Temple University, wanted to learn what causes people to change and develop different attitudes and cultural values. Below she compares her own life experiences with those of the second generation individuals she interviewed. She considers Spanish her first language and was dismayed to find that some people are uncomfortable communicating in Spanish and some don't even want their children to learn it.

a different
experience

I wanted to be an interviewer to learn a little bit more about the Puerto Rican people that are living here because I just came here three years ago and it was like a different kind of experience that these other Puerto Ricans went through and I didn't. So it was something for me, for my own good and for the Workshop.

Sometimes we tend to generalize, all the Puerto Ricans came because they were going to work in a factory or the farms and it seems to me that there have been very different situations. The reason was basically the same one, it was an economical move, or that you wanted to do something better for yourself. Sometimes it turns out to be that way and sometimes it doesn't.

not with
this kind
of struggle

Most of the people that I interviewed were second generation. I learned what kind of life they lived here, what kind of experiences and situations that some of the people went through. The father of one person I interviewed died on the farm and then they had to start all over again, the mother and all the kids deciding what they were going to do. Another family all came here when they were high school kids and went through a lot of problems because of the prejudice in the schools...the blacks and the Puerto Ricans. Right now I know that there are still problems like that but not like fights in gangs and that kind of stuff. They went through all that, being scared of walking alone from the schools because some kids were waiting for them to hit them. I went through a lot of other problems in Puerto Rico, when I was an adolescent in high school, but not real problems now that I sit down and I think.... I was with my family living happily, maybe not too much money but we were surviving and not with this kind of struggle every day.... As second generation you don't have that much of a choice, you are just here, you are part of the United States already, and at the same time you are Puerto Rican and you are like in between. Some of the people I interviewed went through a stage that they denied being Puerto Ricans. It was a real bad thing for them and everybody was pointing at them; but right now when they get old enough, they are proud of being Puerto Ricans.

they denied
being
Puerto
Ricans

and finally
they become
somebody
different...

I never judge somebody "you act like this", but you check people out, you say "this one feels very Puerto Rican, these others, they don't want their own kids, their own children to learn Spanish" and you see the difference and you say "but they are all Puerto Ricans, they came here, how come they are acting different now?" Now I understand that it all depends on the particular case and sometimes is not up to them what they want to do, it's just the prejudice and all the pressures they go through because they are a minority here, their language is different, their culture is different and they go through a lot of changes and finally they become somebody different. I feel that they are Puerto Ricans and they are proud to be Puerto Ricans; some of them show it more than others but I can understand that now.

better to
talk
English

I never interviewed a real old person. I would like to. I think that I'd feel more comfortable because I was doing the interviews in Spanish. Most of the second generation of young people, it's better for them to talk in English because they get very conscious that they can't express themselves in Spanish. I would like to interview an older person because basically

I would like to interview an older person because basically their first language is Spanish and we could relate better because I still consider Spanish my first language.

They are
more clear

I'd prefer to interview an older person because I think they are more clear, they know exactly what was happening. Most of the second generation if you ask them "why did your mother or father come over here?" they don't know, they just know that they are here right now. With older people it seems that their memories are coming back and they remember why they came from Puerto Rico, how life was over there, first experiences that they had here, different kinds of jobs and how they feel now. They are more sincere, too, because they really feel all the problems that they had.

"How Puerto
Rican are
you?"

The way I used to do it was starting from "Who came here first, was it your father, or mother, or your whole family?" and from that, get more chronological and get as much information on that first generation, the parents if it was the case. After that we talked about the kind of jobs that this person had, different kinds of experience, schools, different attitudes. Another really good subject is "How Puerto Rican you are? How often do you eat Puerto Rican food? Do you come shopping around this area? Do you use Spanish as your first language in your house? Do you teach Spanish to your kids?"

Some didn't
have
problems.

Some of them came here too early, too young, but if they used to live in Puerto Rico, how life was there, if they used to live in the country or the city, the kind of things they used to do, how they felt as a family, what kind of problems they used to have. Sometimes they didn't have any kind of problems. Some of the families used to live real happy because they used to have their own land and they used to have food to eat and a house and then they came here and all the problems started.

It shocked
me.

Another person was telling me the way she sees the Puerto Rican community, why they don't live around here, why they don't want their children to learn Spanish. It shocked me because I tell you that I think even the third or fourth generation should at least know the language, because you never know when you are going back. That's the way I feel, and it is your culture, too and it is something that you have. It is an advantage to you. But some people see it like "it is going to be too much of a problem for the kids to learn two languages and I better put them in a catholic school with these nuns that they only speak real good English and that's good for them." It shocked me because it is not somebody from the street that doesn't know how to read telling me, it is somebody who works and is supposed to be a very important person in the community. She has this attitude, pretending that she is something but at the same time, the way she acts, and her values let you know that she is really behind.... I know the daughter and she doesn't talk in Spanish. She has to understand what they talk in the house, at least if they talk a little bit in Spanish she has to learn because she is a bright girl, but she pretends. When you talk in Spanish she goes "I don't understand."

"I don't
understand"

Why do you make an oral history project? In the case of the Puerto Ricans, we came here and we really don't have that much information like in history books why they came here. In any book you will find "this year some

Puerto Ricans came here" but you really don't know the truth, why they came here, where they used to live. Something more like geographic population, that kind of information you can't find in a history book. Some people don't even care.

I think they could try to let other people know about it because I don't think a lot of people are really aware that there was an oral history project here. We know because we work here but I mean people from the community or people that have something to do with oral history, they don't have to be Puerto Ricans. I think they should try to print something, a novel or some articles for the newspaper or even a book of what has been happening with the Puerto Rican emigration.

What factors
affect people
to change?

I would like to find out different reasons why somebody that at certain age had this experience how come at the end, right now they turn out some of them just hanging out...they don't want to study or do more for themselves. Other people are already professionals and of these people who are working, are lawyers or whatever, some of these people still care about Puerto Ricans and some don't even want to hear the word even though they are Puerto Ricans. What kind of factors affect these people to change, to have different attitudes?

Are you planning to interview your family?

now we all
have
different
lives

I would like to because now that I am living here I go there . at Christmas time and summer time and my sister already has a boy and my brother is now studying in Boston. we don't sit down and talk much of "what is really happening with your life and what do you think about this and that?" Because people do change, I feel that I have been changing all the time and I still have to change more so I would like to do more like an attitude kind of interview, "what do you think about this now? Because probably when we used to live together we were younger we used to think the same way all the time, but now we all have different lives and we are doing different things. I guess we are just different, and I would like to know how different.

Are you glad that you came to Philadelphia?

I go through
stages.

Well, today, let me think how I feel about it. I just go through stages once in a while, sometimes more often than for a while. Every month I go through this stage that I don't want to be here anymore or that the weather is killing me or that there is nothing else to do, just go here and there and you can't go to the beach or the country. People are so different, I used to think about it a lot, but now I just...

People, things to do, what you look forward to. I see myself now working like a dog and then I go to my house and work. Before in Puerto Rico I used to work, I was working for the government but I used to do other things, and I was thinking always about this and that. Here sometimes you just get involved with one thing and it's more like a competition "the principal is going to come, these other teachers are doing this and they say you don't have enough kids". They are always saying something and sometimes it's hard, you just have to ignore them. I guess you just have to do it because if you let yourself get hurt or annoyed because somebody is acting like this or saying this or that you, forget it, you would go crazy. So here you just have to be very strong and I see myself, I have changed since I came here. I was not ignorant or that I didn't know the facts of life, I knew a lot, but here you have to watch all your steps and before something happens you think about it.



Project Interviewer Ivan Alicea, a student at Haverford College, had come from Puerto Rico 2 years before the project began and had little contact with Puerto Ricans living in Philadelphia. Here he discusses the effects of his project experiences on his concept of himself, his knowledge of and relationship with Puerto Ricans living in the United States, and his urge toward social action.

Through the project, I learned how Puerto Ricans live in the United States, their problems and what keeps them together, what keeps them going, their faults, their way of living, how it is similar to the way of living in Puerto Rico, a lot of things.

all you hear
is the bad
things

When I came to Haverford, and this happens to a lot of Puerto Ricans from the island, all you hear about is all the Puerto Rican gangs and the fights, what hits the headlines is all the bad things, so you generally come to an impression that somehow the Puerto Ricans that are in the States are the bad ones, as opposed to the ones in Puerto Rico. So that's maybe why I never made an effort to make any contacts. Getting more involved in the project, meeting a lot of people my views have changed a lot.... It is not true, there is not any difference from Mainland and Island Puerto Ricans, except that they live in different parts of the world.

unspoken
racism

Compared to city life in Puerto Rico life in Philadelphia is very different. Just commuting in the city in Philadelphia is very different from Puerto Rico because of the system. It is very uncomfortable because there is some unspoken racism that is very easy to sense. When I would get in the trolley where they were all black, I would sense that some people were uncomfortable and that in turn would make me feel uncomfortable. And sometimes in the neighborhood where I met a lot of people it was not until they knew that I was a Puerto Rican that they really opened up to me. So it is different...

when people
sit down
their
upbringing
comes out

I didn't feel at home like walking down the street, but I felt at home when I was maybe having lunch or dinner either at a restaurant or at somebody's house, with some intimate group I could feel at home... Not because I knew them, but because essentially with Puerto Ricans when people sit down their upbringing and everything comes out. Just walking down the street, you do identify with some people and you say "Yes, this person looks more Puerto Rican or this scene is more Puerto Rican" which reminds you, it reminds me of back home.

I want to
live in
the
neighborhood.

I learned a lot, but I would like to actually live in the neighborhood for some time and to establish many friendships there because much of the information I learned is more second handed than first handed, things that have happened to other people whom I have met and I have learned about but not many things that I have witnessed or anything that has happened to me. I enjoyed interviewing older people because essentially they can provide for me the things about the past that I just didn't live. Most of them were people who have lived here at least 15 years.

more self-
assured,
aggressive...

Did you see any difference from Puerto Ricans that have been raised here? O, yes. They are more outspoken and more self-assured and more aggressive, more outgoing... It makes me feel that I have to learn a lot. There is something that from living in the United States has made them stronger, tougher and more alive, something that I think is very important and I would like to learn more about it.... They would be very successful in Puerto Rico. I don't think that they need to be as outspoken, but it would be very helpful

more
"American"
in Puerto
Rico

It is definitely very helpful to be aggressive and outspoken but I think going back to Puerto Rico in some cases can be very disillusioning for some Puerto Ricans. Because as strange as it seems, the Puerto Ricans in the United States are in a sense less assimilated or anglosized than some Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. It is very different but it is more "American" in Puerto Rico.

a sense of
being
Puerto Rican

I learned many things. I learned why some Puerto Ricans have a strongly negative attitude toward the Americans. I understand why, and I back it up. I learned that there is a very real sense of being Puerto Rican as there are many people in the community and they are trying to help each other even though I don't think it's organized.... What you hear in Puerto Rico, is like, it was a riot, a march against this, a march against that, which you sort of don't really know why it is happening, but you know that is happening and it sort of gives you a negative feeling about what is going on.

I was angry
and
frustrated.

I feel good because I have learned a lot of things, but I was very angry also. All of my interviews were mainly with old people. A lot of older people in Philadelphia, Puerto Ricans, are having a lot of problems, with Social Security, with money. The agencies are there to help, but nobody really helps them. They really don't know where to go and who to ask. It is all there, but it is very unorganized and I was very frustrated by that.

They are not
really
helping the
community.

I really felt that I should do something about it. I didn't know where to start, I talked to Pucho and said "Things are not organized, and maybe Taller should be responsible for starting to organize more actively the community, to make real honest contact in different governmental offices that would really have some input and some desire to help the Puerto Rican community." There are some people, but they aren't doing their function right, they are not really representing or helping the community at large.

These people haven't really reached out to make the community aware that they are there, that they can help them and many people in the community were not aware of the different offices and people they could contact about their problems. So people who didn't know English, they just felt "there is no place here where I can call for this problem,...my family has to somehow solve this problem."

The project
was very
useful.

I feel ambivalent about evaluating the results of the project. If the basic purpose was that the participants of the project were to learn more about themselves and the community they are in... I think it was very useful. If the purpose of the project was indeed to come up with an oral history book, I think there is still a lot more to be done, but I think it had a good start.

go out to
the people

The project, the outcome of the project itself I would say is most valuable. Its value is that it gets people to speak about their problems and where they came from and just where we started. It defines what the problem is but it really doesn't solve anything.... This information should be all compiled into a general description of all the things that are going on and from that data should be seen where the most problems are, why the problems exist and what can be done, basically just going out to the people and start working with the problems based on the data we have.

start
working on
problems

That's what I ultimately would like to do, to start going out to the community and talking to people and saying "this is what we have done and this is what we found out and we are going to do this, we would like for people to be aware of these services that are available and just going out

to people because if the final result of all this is just a pamphlet that only the people interested on the project could read, it really isn't going to do anything.

the ones who left, the ones who stayed

I would like to interview a lot of old Puerto Ricans here and in the Island, in terms of people who have more or less similar experiences. the ones who left and the ones who stayed. The ones who stayed, why didn't they go, why did they go as opposed to staying, how did they change? The people who left, how did they progress, how they have changed as opposed to the people staying.

You have to stick together.

Even though the first and second generation of Puerto Ricans in the States are very different I think that in a sense they get along better than the same first and second generation that are on the island. Because no matter what you have to stick together to survive here and that is not so, too, in Puerto Rico.

I did get to know a lot of people and not only on interviews but at their homes. I was invited to come again and I just really was exposed very much to city living in Philadelphia.

"Puerto Ricans Ricans over there"

The awareness that you have now about the situation with Puerto Ricans here, does your family have it too? Your brothers and sisters, if any of them have been here?... My brother, he does because he has been here but my family is not aware. It is hard to explain, you start explaining and they say "but Puerto Ricans over there" it seems that everybody is bad except their relatives that come from Puerto Rico to the United States but they don't realize that everybody in Puerto Rico has relatives in the States and they will all probably say the same thing, so either they are all good or all bad.

tell it as it is

Do you think that Puerto Ricans know what it is like before they come here? "No. I think that this is more disappointing to come from Puerto Rico to the States than go from the States to Puerto Rico. If you go to Puerto Rico now and you find out that this family is selling all their stuff because they are going to come to the United States, how do you feel?... "I would talk to them, for sure, and tell them what to expect and not to expect. At least for my experiences in the United States I wouldn't move here..." But do you think most of us would do that, actually telling them how it really is?... "I think that that's a very interesting point. I don't think so. I think that many Puerto Ricans come to the States and they are fooled by the situation here but in terms of pride they don't really tell it as it is..."

a larger variety

I am pretty much satisfied by the way the project was working. I think that a larger variety of Puerto Ricans could be interviewed. I think that even though there is a large variety of people interviewed, they all belong to the same class, it is either old people in their house or young outspoken people. I don't think that we have many professionals, or many adolescents, I would like to make it more spread out with different kinds of Puerto Ricans. I think that it would be also interesting to interview some of the other latin people in the community perhaps some Cubans and their experiences as opposed to ours.

I identify very much with what they were saying because they were talking about things that are common to me. Like if someone was telling me what happened in 1930, some of the things they said made me remember things my father has told me. Yes, we come from the same background but we lived in different places and had different problems and attitudes because we lived in

understand
the
bitterness
toward
Americans

different places and had different problems and attitudes because we lived in different places. There are some things that I didn't identify with, I tried to but it was hard for me. Like I have never been a subject of racism or discrimination because I am Puerto Rican, so even though I hear these stories, and I can see why they are there and what has happened it is still something that has never happened to me. At the beginning it was hard to understand why there is this bitterness of some Puerto Ricans toward Americans but now it has become clear to me.

Do you think you made a big contribution, yourself? I hope so, time is time, I don't know how big a contribution I made. I think I "puse mi granito" also. ["I put in my grain of sand"]



Marta Torres discusses the project from her point of view as a transcriber and evaluator. She talks of the impact the project has had on her and her desire to interview other women and children, write her autobiography, and eventually write a book on "our experience here". She is beginning her college education and hopes to help teenage girls prepare for womanhood. The project, she says, has made her more understanding of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia and of herself. Her only regret is that she was not involved more and feels the project must continue in order to use what's been accomplished to date.

I knew them
better

After I interviewed the interviewers I felt very good. I felt close to them, I knew them better. It was a good feeling. Talking to people is always a good feeling, I think, when you are really going to be honest and try to enrich each other's lives. You are interested in what is in their minds and what it is they are feeling. You want to share that feeling and share your feelings with them, too. I felt very good, I still do when I read the interviews.

women and
children

I would have liked to interview more women and some children. I would like to do oral history on women because I think we are so interesting. I would like to know how children see this big mess, how do they feel about it and how it is affecting them. I have learned from my children a lot, they are outspoken, because I have heard my own speak about living here and living in Puerto Rico I would like to talk to other children, too.

from our
point of
view

Did the project lead me to something new? Yes, indeed. The project has lead me to wanting to do more oral history, I really want to write a book. I don't know how to write a book, but I want to. I think that I am just going to compile the information and later on, when I am capable I will put it down in a book. I really would like to write our experience here, ours or maybe just mine. I think that for years to come people should be able to read and know what Philadelphia is like from our point of view; us telling it. How was our life here, honestly, the good things and the bad. When someone tells me they come from New York, that they have lived there or were born there, right away I know how their life was in New York. I have read about it in books, in detail and I can understand them even though I have never lived in New York myself.

we are not
prepared

Now I am planning to start my college education. This work has led me to want to concentrate on teenagers, teenage girls especially. I want to help them prepare to be mothers, to be women, because we are not prepared to do that. We are not taught, we are not trained. It is just assumed that because we watched our mothers or grandmothers and because we are females that we will know. That is going to make us good mothers and good women. It is not that way and I would like to help the girls before it is too late.

I think the project was worthy. It is worth doing a bigger project, talking to everybody, getting everybody involved. If we could get one person from each family to commit him or herself to interview the rest of the people in that family and just have a folder per family. That would be great.

interviewing
the
interviewers

The first thing I did with the project was to type the proposal while working part-time at Taller. After that I was not directly involved with the project because they needed me as Administrative Assistant. When Julio was almost done with his work as director and Pucho had gone back to school I was asked to finish transcribing and to evaluate the project. In order to do the evaluation I interviewed six of the ten interviewers. By doing these interviews I found out how the interviewers felt, what they did and what they learned.

Young people

I didn't have the opportunity to go out and interview people, my own interviewees and ask the questions I wanted to ask. My preference would be to interview young people because I don't know them that well. I pretty much know how old people think and feel about things since I was around older people most of my life. Young people, especially teenagers born and raised here in the United States are very different from me and that's why I would like to talk to them and get to know and understand their way of doing things.

more
understanding

Working in this project has made me a more understanding and accepting person of my people here in Philadelphia. In the past I used to feel so disappointed because I expected a lot more of Puerto Ricans than what they were putting out, in my opinion. Now I understand why some drop out of school, cannot speak Spanish, have never been in Puerto Rico, etc. and I also have seen how they have struggled to keep being PUERTO RICANS.

so many
changes

I wanted to participate in the project because I was very curious about what people had to say. I wanted to know if people were thinking the way I was thinking and feeling the way I was feeling and kind of wanted to feel people out, and when I heard about the project I thought it was the perfect thing.

Well, how they feel, what they come here for, were they sorry they came here, that kind of thing, were they planning to go back, were they planning to stay. There is a lot of controversial stuff about that and about being a Puerto Rican here. Because I have been through so many changes since I came here I just wanted to know if anybody else was going through that, too.

I learned
about myself.

The project was very good, considering that it was small. We don't even have 100 interviews all together. We learned a lot, we had a lot of people participating and there was a lot of interest in the community about it. I am just sorry that I didn't participate more, that I was not more directly involved while it was going on.

While I was working on the project I learned about myself. I learned why Puerto Ricans here want to identify with the Blacks, why they want to identify with the Americans, but the main thing was that I learned to look at myself. Just by transcribing some interviews, when people said how many times they had moved and all that, I said "Let me check myself." and I have moved 16 times in 7 years. I know that I would not have done this if I had not been working with the transcriptions.

I started checking myself. I started writing my autobiography and trying to see how much I could remember, and now I am planning to interview my family. It made me more aware, because there are some things that you think you know about your family because of some of the things they say, but you really don't know because you don't ask the details. In an interview you really get all that.

I don't think I made a big contribution because if we don't do a bigger project this one is going to be kind of wasted. We cannot let a lot of time go by without talking to people. We are going to regret not doing it and later on people are going to resent the fact that those of us who are in charge now and can do it, don't do it.

I feel capable of running an oral history project but it would have to be clear cut what is that we are after, everybody with the same feeling and willingness to give their own time.

I didn't take any training on how to conduct an interview, since I was not an "interviewer". The only training I had was that I wanted to know. I was very much interested and didn't see my interviewee as just a mouth that was going to talk to me. I saw the person and was very interested in the person. I wanted to feel good after the interview and I wanted the person to feel good, too. I was not just digging out. I felt every word they were saying to me and I would get mad, serious, or laugh depending what they were saying because I really participated and got involved in the interviews. The main thing was: I really wanted to know.

I really
wanted
to know.

If we do another project we should get more volunteers because when people give their own time they don't waste it. They try to do their best.



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PROBLEMS:

In their evaluation of the project, participants pointed to the following problems: administrative burdens, decision making and control of project resources, insufficient personnel and equipment, too high expectations, role delineation "everybody doing a little bit of everything", communication among interviewers, and with interviewees, continuity of personnel, transcribing, compensation of interviewees, and concern over the end product, what's going to happen to this information.

Below, project director Julio Ruiz talks about the problems as he saw them:

A little bit
of everything

We didn't have a full-time secretary, someone who was there day in and day out transcribing and typing everything that came in. It was believed that everybody was going to be doing a little bit of everything. Myself, I like interviewing, I think that I can do a hell of a job interviewing. I like listening to the tapes. I don't like transcribing even though I do it, but I feel that my time would be much more essential to the project by doing interviews. That's the way I felt when I confronted all the interviewers. I said "certain interviewers are going to be better for interviewing and some people are going to be better for typing and transcribing". But no. Someone said that that was not the way it was going to be, that the proposal said that we were going to interview, transcribe and type and process. That was impossible.

to reap
the most
benefits

Of course, we wanted to reap the most benefits, we wanted everyone to participate in all aspects. We wanted everyone to get a feel for and to hear the problems that the community is having. We wanted to take advantage of that wide scope of benefits. That's why we failed, in a way, because we tried to make the most of it. There is no crime against that, and in that sense I can understand the mistakes that we made and I accept them. I made as many mistakes as anybody else did; as a matter of fact, I made more mistakes, but I ran into a lot more problems. I ran into times when I had to make decisions and seek resources that were beyond my control. Those things have to be changed: the whole structure of the project, resources, what is going to be done with the results and the purpose of the project. All of these things have to be sorted out before another project takes off.

people
were living
the problems

We didn't have any full-time staff members. Everybody was part-time. They were community people. People that were living the problems that we just finished talking about a few minutes ago. We weren't dealing with people that were coming from outside the community, well refreshed and single people, well-educated people. No, we were dealing with people that are not trained to work with each other. Here we had a project with people that were supposed to work with themselves, but they could not. There was a lot of friction. Less than I expected, but yet it was there.

people
should be
compensated

If you are talking to someone in the community, their time is precious. If I go and sit with somebody for two hours, those hours are precious, be a clergyman, be a teacher, be a lawyer, be a community leader, their time is valuable, just like my time is valuable and your time is valuable. So these people should be compensated for this time. We haven't done it yet, we haven't developed anything that we are going to be giving to the interviewees, something to compensate. This helps the people participate a lot more and gets them to tell other people. Despite us not doing it that way we got a good response, but these are other ways that it can be done, by paying interviewees, but we took the hardest way.

"a hell of
a project!"

That doesn't mean that the people did not appreciate the project or want to get involved or that people did not value the project. On the contrary, there wasn't one individual that participated that didn't value the project. There wasn't one day that went by, or one interview that someone didn't tell me "This is a hell of a project." I got that all around. I know it is a hell of a project, but we have done it for the first time and we made a lot of mistakes. I have just mentioned a few. Those mistakes if we ever do project, have to be corrected.

the project
is still
incomplete

Project interviewer Ani Acevedo was concerned about continuity of leadership and communication and decision-making within the project.

"I feel that the project is still incomplete. I think there were a lot of loop holes in it. A lot of people that started in the project dropped off and there was a draw back because of that. Some of the people who kind of organized the thing when they left there was a big gap. I think that when Pucho was here, maybe because he was able to be here, physically here at the Taller and organize the tapes and the interviews and keep checking on what was happening, things were marching along a little more together. When he left there was no one, really, to kind of fill in his place and I think there was a sort of decline. I don't think of the project as being finished or complete. In fact, I feel that the project is just beginning now.

information
kept within
one or two
people

I feel that a lot of information that went on with the Oral History Project was kept within one or two people and not really spread out to the rest of the people doing the actual interviews. At some points I didn't know really what I was doing and I wasn't sure if doing a certain thing was acceptable or not within the project.

everyone to
contribute

Towards the end of the project I was asked to do an evaluation or profile on Puerto Rican women, gotten from the information that we gathered through the tapes. It was never really explained to me what they wanted and then when I had started working on the project I was told skip it, forget it, go ahead and finish the interviews, that's more important. So then the reports were done by Pucho and Julio and I feel that was an example right there. What was supposed to have happened was that everyone in the project was supposed to contribute some type of written evaluation to be used in the final evaluation of the whole project, which wasn't done. I think that slacking off happened because some of the people had to leave and there was no one there to really follow up.

We have presented these problems so that others contemplating similar projects might benefit from our experience.

Project Advisor Rick Hall discusses below the special problems encountered in a group project.

group
projects

Community-based group projects are extremely important because they can extend participation to include more individuals and a wider scope of activities. This is both their greatest strength and a potential area of problems.

the
cost of
administration

Managing a project involving 10 or more people is a complex task requiring extraordinary managerial talent on top of mastery of the task at hand i.e. doing an oral history project. It involves effectively assessing leadership capabilities and making appropriate changes as talents unfold or fail to unfold. All the individuals involved in the project were perceptive individuals, at different stages in their own personal development. As Julio Ruiz pointed out, some people were more effective at some things than others. William Santiago's (Pucho) evaluation interview shows his growth not only as an oral history interviewer but also as a project administrator. He now knows he wants to be an organizer. He laments the fact, however, that he didn't have enough time to write and analyze more of the material and he didn't get to interview as much as he wanted either. Julio, expresses his high level of frustration with administrative controls and problems and opts to become "an independent community data gatherer". Marta functions well as a transcriber, typist, data organizer and evaluator--but her real sensitivity and talents are as an interviewer. In each case, administrative tasks were assumed out of necessity and limited the individual's participation in the activities.

advisory
function
limited

A frank appraisal of the advisory relationships within the organization would include the observation that for much of the project, the administrative burdens fell entirely on project participants. The proposed in-house advisor roles projected for me and director Domingo Negrón were circumscribed by our involvement in fighting for the continued financial survival of the organization at large. A severe cut-back in personnel made it almost impossible to fulfill the advisory function in any consistent manner. Dr. Jacobs had left the city at the close of the pilot project and William and Julio were only available on a part-time basis. Also lack of availability and communication was sometimes interpreted as "neglect" on both sides which further limited the advisory function.

timing,
scope,
inadequate
financial
resources

Timing, scope and inadequate financial resources were elements which adversely affected the leadership and advisory functions. Originally the project was designed as a companion project to a locally funded bicentennial effort in 1976. \$10,000 Youthgrants was to be matched with \$12,000 from Phila. '76 and other funds from additional sources. Full-time advisors and project participants were available during summer months. Unfortunately YOUTHGRANT funds were made available after the local monies were expended resulting in an extension of the project over periods of time during which other funds, advisory personnel and project participants were not available. The result was that funds already inadequate for a one-year project of the proposed scope were extended over a two-year period.

A greater insistence on matching funds including assistance in obtaining such monies might have resulted in additional funding from the Public Committee on the Humanities in Pa., other divisions of NEH and local foundations. Hind-sight is always frustrating but instructive. To a community-based organization

\$10,000 appears much larger than it is. What we failed to recognize and use was the fact that the NEH grant could have been used to open doors and obtain the needed additional funds.

guidelines
for
group
projects

Because YOUTHGRANTS seems to be focused largely on individuals there seems to be confusion and some lack of direction concerning group projects which are enormously more complicated to administer. While we applaud the help received from the Youthgrants staff and the flexibility in terms of time extensions, we would insist on the relative importance of group projects in terms of ultimate impact, and urge the development of appropriate guidelines and assistance which would increase the likelihood of adequately funded projects of manageable scope occurring with co-incidental funding and human resources.

social
science
vs.
humanistic
orientation

A final comment: Perhaps it was the force of social problems of racism, housing and employment, and the bias of the original investigators, but throughout the project runs a social science content orientation. The actual experience of the interviewers was profoundly humanistic including much introspection and comparison of cultural values and social concerns. The interviews are replete with cultural expressions and nuances...but these did not always get singled out for attention.

The social problems and the urge to do something about them took precedence over the fine points of cultural expression. The most pressing humanistic concern was that of the relationship between island and mainland Puerto Ricans and how they see each other. This alone and the personal insights gained by the participants would justify the project. What remains is to resift the material and add in greater detail the morsels of cultural nuance which tell the story of the daily life experience of "Juan Pueblo".



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Oral History
Conference

A June 1978 conference on Oral History and Photography focused on access to tools for self study. At an afternoon evaluation session, Dr. Richard Chalfin, Temple University anthropologist presented commentary on photography as a documentary medium. Dr. John Bodner, William Penn Museum, Harrisburg commented on Oral History efforts, joined by Dr. Dennis Clark, Samuel Fels Fund, Dra. Adriana Galanes and Vivian Auffant, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, Temple University. The evening session featured presentation by Dra. Adriana Galanes of a paper evaluating the Oral History Project and calling for its continuation on a larger scale.

A slide tape presentation by Tom Morton combined oral history and photography as did photo-exhibits by Patricia Negron and members of the Taller Photography project. Dr. Dennis Clark commented on the significance of the projects from his view as an ethnic historian. Hiram Maristany, former director of the Museo del Barrio in New York, commented from his point of view as a photographer. William Santiago, Julio Ruiz and Marta Torres presented their impressions of their roles in the Oral History Project and fielded questions and comments from the audience. Perhaps the most poignant commentary was by Sr. Pedro Vasquez, 74, who had been interviewed by Ivan Alicea for the project. Sr. Vasquez spontaneously arose to give a cogent recollection of the beginnings of the Hispanic colony in Philadelphia, and of the importance and worth of present efforts to document its history.

Conference
paper

Dra. Galanes' scholarly appraisal of the project entitled "El Programa de Historia Oral: Lo que hay y lo que urge" (The Oral History Program: What there is and what is urged) is currently being translated into English and will be published along with commentary from the conference sessions. It includes a thought provoking realistic analysis of the present project and a reiteration of the stimulating message presented at the beginning of the project with its abundant references to the particular cultural context of a Puerto Rican oral history.

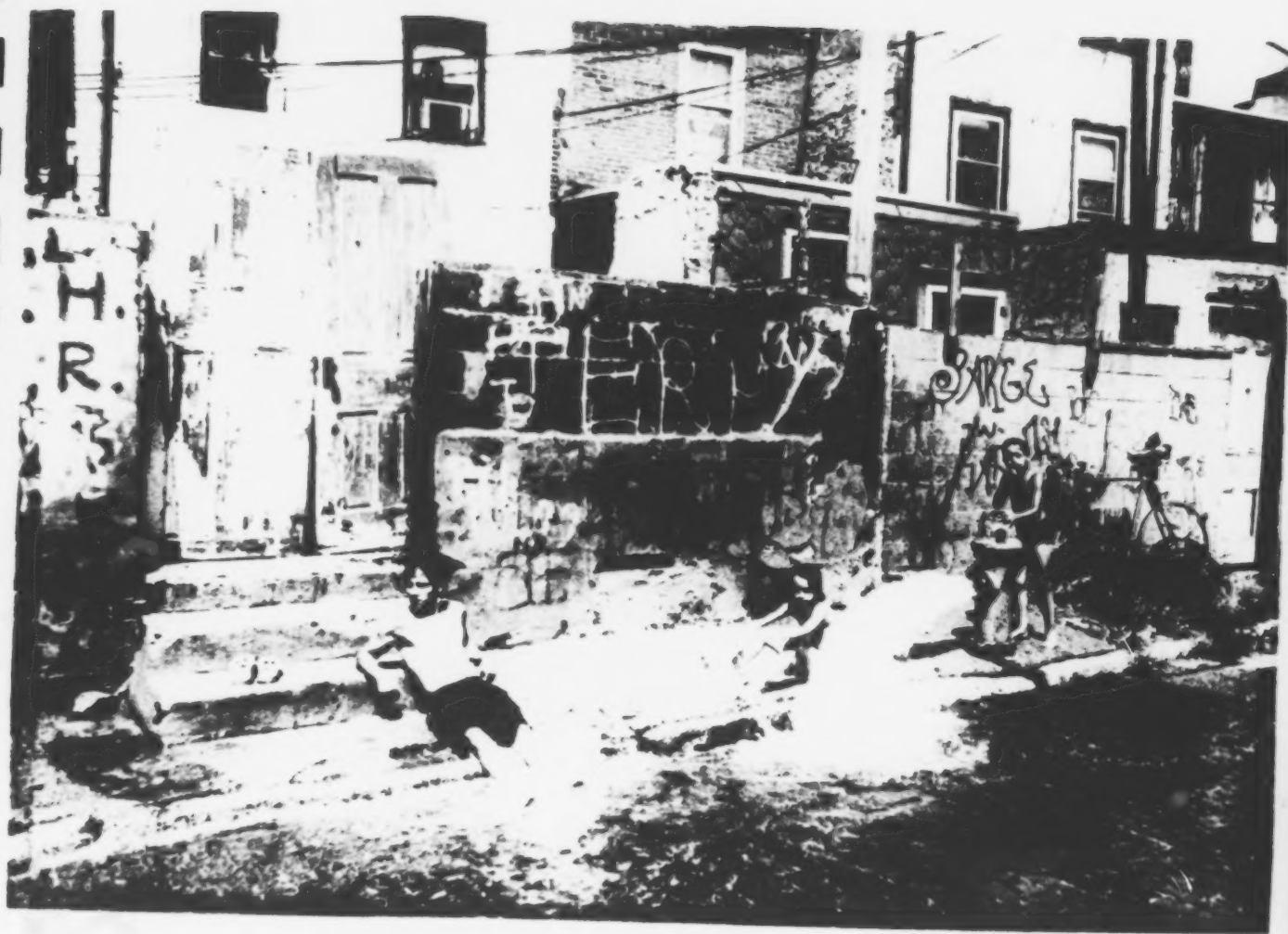
Illustrated
publication

In addition to the dissemination efforts described above an illustrated edited publication is anticipated which will receive wide distribution through bilingual education, youth and community organization networks and associations. Final editing of transcripts and reports and their preparation for publication depends on the availability of additional funding and personnel to continue this final phase of the project. Currently attempts will be made to incorporate some of these tasks in several of the participants' graduate and undergraduate college programs. These efforts of publication are crucial for generating resources for on-going oral history efforts.





SECTION II: INTERPRETIVE REPORT--MIGRATION,
HOUSING & JOBS





The Migration to Philadelphia

Most work on mainland Puerto Ricans focuses on the enclave in New York City. There is little written literature on the Puerto Ricans of Philadelphia. The few official reports by the city's Commission on Human Rights are limited by their exclusive reliance on census data and the unfortunate inclusion of denigrating stereotypes.

The Philadelphia community reflects the national figures on Puerto Ricans in the United States and the migration trends of the geographical displacement of our people. In 1953 there were 1,350 Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. The 1970 census records 38,500. In interviews community leaders disagree with this count. They speculate that anywhere from 60,000 to 100,000 habitate the city. Analysis of school district figures and surveys by local and national organizations including the American Friends Service Committee, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, ASPIRA, and others support the higher figures. It is a young population not only in terms of the length of time it has been established in the area, but in age. Sixteen is the median age.

Don Enrique Rodriguez's family from Carolina was one of the first families to come to Philadelphia. His son Eliezer Rodriguez, who was a Baptist Pastor in Barazas, came over with his wife's entire family. In fact, a large group of relatives migrated at the same time to Philadelphia. Don Enrique's wife would eventually become the first bilingual teacher of the Philadelphia school system. (179)

The Spring Garden area of Philadelphia was the original place where Puerto Ricans settled during the late 1940's and early 1950's. Nearly every interview of Taller's oral history pinpoints this section of the city as the first enclave of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. It is interesting to note that the houses in this area were big enough to create a secondary source of income. By renting out parts of their apartments, people could take on lodgers (mainly, transient migrant workers) for a small fee. Sometimes the extra space was used to bring over to the United States the rest of the family that had remained on the Island.

In those days you could get a plane ticket every 3 or 4 months. (155) The airlines only had 2-motor planes that left San Juan at four in the afternoon and arrived at ten in Miami. The passengers would spend the night there and the next morning at ten they would take a flight to New York which arrived at six in the evening. (180) In essence, it was an airborne migration.

How was life for the first Puerto Ricans of Spring Garden?

"In 1952 there were few hispanics in the area, you could count them in one hand. The hispanics that lived there sat on the stairs in front of the houses and the people on the third and second floor would throw water on our backs. We saw signs that read apartment for rent--whites only... A lot of times I was in the street. I was 14 or 15 at the time. The police would see us in the street and would take us to police headquarters. There they would hit us with a rubber hose. Afterwards we had to put a dollar in a basket they had. In one week my brother had to pay three dollars. Then, our parents would hit us for getting into trouble." (153)

"Most jobs that were available consisted of manual labor in factories or washing dishes in hotels such as the Warwick or Ritz on 16th and Chestnut. Politically, the Spring Garden area was controlled by Frank O'Day, a Cuban. When the Puerto Rican nationalists attacked Blair House where president Truman resided the hispanics of Spring Garden were worried of a possible police vengeance on the community. The only fight that broke out at the time were between Puerto Ricans and Irish, and blood was spilled." (151)

"In 1952, the first Spanish Catholic church was established, La Milagrosa on 19th and Spring Garden. One interviewee mentioned that the family attended a protestant parrish until La Milagrosa was opened. (159) The first Spanish Baptist Church was located on 12th and Wallace until they left because the community was decaying. There were a couple of incidents that would disrupt Sunday school; for instance, when everyone was in church, people's coats were stolen." (166)

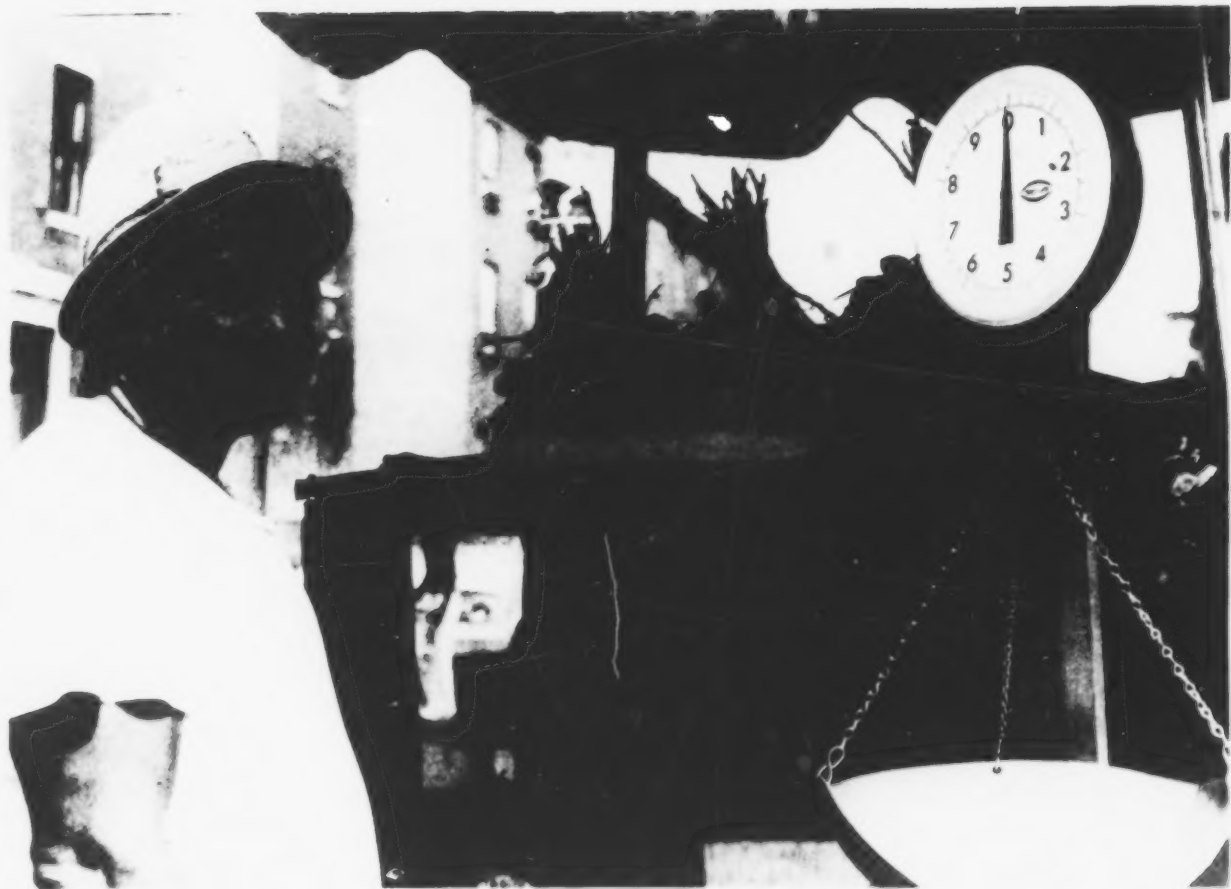
"There were only two or three 'bodegas' where Puerto Ricans could buy 'arroz, habichuelas y bacalao'. Domingo Martinez had a store on Fairmount y Marshall. He sold 'malanga, batata, tocino y arenque ahumada'. On 12th and Green the Fuente Brothers also had a store that sold Spanish food. (153)

There was no one single pattern of migration to Philadelphia. But, on the whole, Puerto Ricans tended to first settle in other parts of the country, mainly the Jersey farms, an then turn to Philadelphia for permanent residence. Furthermore, one member of a family would arrive in the United States and afterwards send for the rest of the family. One young Puerto Rican woman was asked if she had travelled to Puerto Rico. She said that in the last ten years she had gone five times. "Do you stay with relatives?" "No, I do not have any relatives there, they all live in the United States. I went to visit friends." (151) In this case, a complete family had left the island, or at least known relatives were no longer residing in Puerto Rico. The following examples of family migration will show the different instances of the movement from Puerto Rico to the United States and then specifically to Philadelphia.

"In 1950, Don Rivera (fictitious name) came to the fields of New Jersey. He sent for his family, a wife and two kids at the time, a couple of years later. Everyone helped in the fields picking blueberries and strawberries. Unfortunately, Don Rivera suffered an accident with a tractor and was unable to continue working. In order to continue living in the housing that was facilitated by the farmer, dona Rivera had to cook for all the migrant workers. He, Don Rivera, received no social security or workers compensation; the family moved to Hamilton, New Jersey so that Don Rivera might be helped in a hospital. After spending six years in treatment, Don Rivera died. The family moved to Camden and finally Philadelphia where they remain until this day." (152)

"Don Jacinto's two oldest sons came to Philadelphia in 1950 because some friends they knew in the city told them they could find jobs in a hotel, and they did. Four years later, Don Jacinto also migrated to work as a dishwasher in the same hotel his sons worked at. He planned to return to the island in 1960, but that year he died of cancer. Dona Jacinta decided to sell the land that they owned on the island, and forget all the past. She moved to Philadelphia to be close to her older sons. Today her sons and daughters are prominent members of the Philadelphia Puerto Rican community. (157)

42a



60

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"In 1944, the Campbell Soup Company recruited Puerto Ricans on the island. Don Santiago came to work in the factory located in Camden. Three years later he sent for his wife and they moved to Mount Vernon Street. In this area they lived in four or five different places. Don Santiago's child was asked: 'Do you remember as a kid living with other relatives?' 'Yea, I remember I lived with cousins in an apartment house, with my cousins and my aunt. They came from Puerto Rico because my father sent for them after we got here and got established.' " (156)

Thus, not only was the nuclear family sent for, but often extended families would migrate. Of course, there were instances of just one Puerto Rican leaving the island alone without his/her family. Carlos Rios was a second year student at the University of Puerto Rico when he was drafted in 1951, hence, his first stay in the United States was in the Armed Forces. After returning to Puerto Rico and graduating with a B.A. in education, Mr. Rios through the Clinton Teacher Agency found employment in Illinois as a Spanish teacher. In 1960, he returned to Puerto Rico, but left to Illinois two years later. In 1964, Carlos Rios decided to go to the Island. A year later he moved to New York because his wife's family lived there. She was able to convince Mr. Rios to come to the big apple. Eventually they moved to Willingboro, New Jersey, which is only 45 minutes from Philadelphia. Mr. Rios is a bilingual teacher in the Philadelphia school system. His wife is kin to the Rodriguez family of Barrozas and Mr. Rios is also from Barrozas.

It is safe to conclude that a "core" group of families established themselves in Philadelphia, and thus, began to serve as a magnet that attracted other Puerto Ricans to the area. People would bring to the city relatives from the island that were in search of jobs. At times, large kinship networks developed that served as a channel of entry for recently arrived migrants. Strategies for survival and adaptation were passed on from the more experienced Puerto Rican to the more naive "Boricua". It should be kept in mind that the Puerto Rican migration is a dynamic process that continues today.

Un hermano de mi esposa se vino para acá con la esposa y nos mandaban cartas "Venganse para acá que acá las cosas estan mejores que fulano es joven y puede conseguir un buen trabajo aquí en transportación." Llegamos aquí en el año 1949 a esta ciudad. Cuando llegamos aquí apenas habían 100 puertorriqueños y donde empezó la colonia fue en la calle 7 entre Spring Garden y Girard. Cuando yo llegué a esta ciudad era un encanto aquí. Los domingos no se oía ni un carro tocar la bocina. En el verano tu podías dejar tu puerta abierta, las ventanas abiertas y dormir frente de tu casa porque la calor era fuerte. La policía patrullaba. Todo era barato, la carne, el pan. Lo que se conseguia caro eran los productos latinos porque los tenían que traer de New York.

Nosotros vinimos para Estados Unidos por primera vez en el 1953. Vinimos a New Jersey. En el 1963 volvimos para Puerto Rico y ese mismo año mi papá volvió para acá, Philadelphia. Fuimos a vivir a la calle Mt. Vernon. Ahí estuvimos como tres años y luego volvimos a Puerto Rico. Después volvimos a Philadelphia a vivir en la 9 y Huntingdon, estuvimos ahí como dos años. Después nos mudamos para la 5 y York y ahora ellos llevan ahí como 5 años. Yo ahora estoy casado y vivo en la 7 y Ontario.

PERFIL DE UNA FAMILIA

El papá mío era de Lares, la mamá mía era de Moca. Dos de mis hermanos nacieron en el mismo pueblo donde nacieron mis papas. Somos cinco hermanos y dos hermanas. Yo soy el tercero de los hijos. Los otros todos nacieron en New Jersey, en Camden. Vivíamos en una finca en Camden.

El papá mío fue el primero que se mudó de Puerto Rico a Estados Unidos. El vino acá a buscar, a ver lo que encontraba para después mandar a buscar la familia. Esto fue a fines del 1950, algo por ahí. El vino a New Jersey como Migrant Worker. No estoy seguro pero creo que el sabía para donde venía, quizás alguna agencia le informó porque ellas hacían un chorro de pasajes para acá y contratos con "farmers." El vino y se quedó y nos mandó a buscar. Vinimos juntos la familia completa. Estuvimos como nueve años en New Jersey después nos mudamos a Filadelfia.

Yo llevo en Filadelfia 17 años. Mi mamá estuvo casi 13 años sin ir a Puerto Rico. El papá mío después que llegó nunca volvió porque como a los 6 años de estar aquí murió de un accidente que tuvo en una finca. El estuvo 6 años en el hospital después que llegó aquí, de un accidente en un tractor. No nos dieron nada, ni Seguro Social, Welfare fue lo único.

Después de eso mi mamá tuvo que, para seguir viviendo en la casa que estábamos que era la casa del farmer, la mamá mía tenía que cocinar, de cocinera para los otros que trabajaban allí y así estuvimos por un tiempo. Después de eso la mamá mía empezó con el Welfare y nos pudimos mudar de allí a otra casa donde no estuvieramos con todos los Migrant Workers que llegaban.



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Intra-city migration and housing:

The Puerto Rican migration to Philadelphia has yet another facet of geographical movement, namely, intra-city migration. Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community has been displaced from the Spring Garden section of the city, and has moved north and towards Roosevelt Boulevard. This latter section is largely populated by the more stably employed members of the community. North Philadelphia is an area of heavier blight, transient residents, and welfare families. Nonetheless, there are Puerto Ricans in this neighborhood who have stable households and plan to remain in North Philadelphia. For a variety of reasons, one principal factor being the desire to live with ones own cultural group, they will fight to keep their community from being displaced.

From the interviews it is clear there is a general tendency to move from home to home in the initial years of residence in the United States. Low income recent arrivals from the island are most prone to changing apartments extensively. One informant told us "We moved around in ten houses in the same four block area." (963) The higher income and more long-term residents of the Puerto Rican community are more stable in terms of residence.

The 1970 census, from a sample of 6656 households, reported the following figures on Puerto Rican families. Thirty one percent were home owners. The median value of the homes was \$6,700. 5465 structures were built before 1939. 5.2 is the mean size of the family, and thirty three percent have yearly incomes below the poverty level.

The following excerpts give an idea of housing and intra-city migration patterns as seen in the interviews:

"I moved into my present neighborhood because where I used to live before, in the Boulevard I felt uncomfortable there, I felt out of place so I went back to where I really came from. Over there something was missing in the relationship with people, I couldn't really communicate with them. This neighborhood is mainly Puerto Rican. I have had plenty of opportunities to move to different neighborhoods but I am always looking for a house around my neighborhood. I like this neighborhood because I am with the surrounding of my people, Puerto Ricans. I don't know if that sounds like prejudice but it's just something that I feel." (956)

"My family moved around different areas in Philadelphia because of the housing. I remember that some of the houses were cold, raggedy and too small as kids were born." (960)

"En el 1973 cuando mi mamá se mudó a la 5 y Luzerne la mayoría de la gente en esa área eran blancos. Ahora se ven muchas caras puertorriqueñas pero al principio eran todos blancos. Mi mamá tenía idea de a donde se estaba mudando porque ella quería mudarse para el otro lado de Erie. Ella quería vivir también en una avenida grande donde no se le hiciera difícil coger trolly y tener que estar andando, porque eso fue otra cosa que mi mamá encontró curioso cuando vino aquí a Philadelphia que uno tenía que pasar trabajo algunas veces para viajar. Cuando mi mamá iba a comprar esa casa, también había otra casa en Cheltenham pero a mami le habían dicho que eso era de morenos y ella no quiso mudarse para allá. Una vez yo pensaba mudarme de aquí de Leithgow e Indiana para Kensington y también cambié de idea porque todo el mundo me dijo que estaba muy lejos, que si me pasaba cualquier cosa

no me iba a encontrar con ayuda porque por allá no habían puertorriqueños. Y no se podía contar con los vecinos y que yo me iba a mudar sola con mi nena y que no era buena idea. Si tuviera la oportunidad me mudaría para el bloque 30 de la calle cinco porque ahora en esta área hay muchas casas y hay planes para arreglarlas y ofrecen dinero. Si me pueden dar dinero yo creo que sería una buena inversión. La casa en que yo vivo ahora es casa propia y en la que tiene mi mamá también yo invertí dinero y si consigo otra casa también la compró." (007)

"I live in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood. When we first came, it was white people here. They moved out and Puerto Ricans moved in, two or three white families are still on the block. After the Puerto Ricans came, four or five black families moved in, so it is mixed, but mostly Puerto Ricans. They are young, there is a lot of children on the block, it is clean and friendly." (994)

"Por el 1962 compramos casa en la 4 y Susquehana. Tuvimos allí unos cuantos años. Cuando yo llegué allí, ese sitio era bueno. Ahí en la 4 eso empezó a descomponerse ahí cuando llegaron latinos. Yo soy puertorriqueño pero la verdad del caso es triste. Cuando llegué aquí, fui el primer latino que compró casa aquí. Esto era aquí un encanto. ¿Y quienes somos? Muchas veces nosotros mismos no damos a demostrar la cultura que tenemos en una forma correcta. Si yo tuviera la oportunidad ahora mismo me mudaría para el norte. He notado que para allá hay más respeto. No hay tanto desorden." (001)

Cuando llegue aquí viví en la 6 y Green, una comunidad donde estaba conglomerada la mayoría de los hispanos y comercios hispanos en esos tiempos. Y me he mantenido más o menos en la misma área. En el 1953 compré mi primera casa en el bloque 14 de Marshall. La compré a través de la administración de veteranos. En el 1968 el School Board me compró la casa porque necesitaban esa área para añadirle un edificio a la escuela. Ahora nosotros vivimos en la 6 y Girard. La casa es mi propiedad. Al vender nuestra casa en la calle Marshall conseguí esta propiedad que estaba en necesidad de reparaciones y pude comprarla a un precio bien barato. La compré y poco a poco estoy arreglándola.

No tengo planes de mudarme del área donde vivo ahora porque mi situación no me lo permite, pero me gustaría. Me gustaría una área donde pudiera sentirme más libre de los problemas y dificultades que encuentro en esta área. Siempre he tenido predilección por el estado de New Jersey. Tal vez por querer lo del campo, me gustaría vivir en una casa con un garaje que pudiera usarlo como taller. Total, tal vez más cómodo y afuera de los problemas de la ciudad.

Una vez, después que ya estábamos viviendo aquí en la 6 nos mudamos para Patterson, New Jersey y estuvimos viviendo allá en casa de mi tío casi un año sin poder conseguir apartamento. Después conseguimos uno pero era un apartamento muy pequeño para todos nosotros. Después conseguimos una casa pero allá lo que uno gana es para renta, la vivienda allá es demasiado cara. Por eso tuve que venir para acá porque allá no se está bien, no se ve nada, todo muerto y muchos problemas.

En mi bloque viven cuatro familias puertorriqueñas, una familia prieta y el resto son blancos.

Puerto Ricans and the Job Market:

It was the promise of more readily available jobs at higher wages which enticed many Puerto Ricans to the United States in the first place. Specifically, wage differentials had attracted them to the mainland. The Island has had to maintain low wages in order to supply cheap labor for industry, whereas the federal minimum wage laws have increased salaries in the United States.

The interviews indicate that most Puerto Ricans moving to Philadelphia are involved in the secondary labor market. Especially important are hotel and restaurant jobs and unskilled factory jobs. This employment sector is characterized by high turnover rates, underemployment, discrimination, unskilled positions, and anti-union activity. These jobs provide migrants unfamiliar with the English language with employment upon their arrival in the United States. But, they do not provide possibilities for stable employment, job advancement or training. However, in spite of this, it is interesting to note that some of the more stable workers had secondary jobs but kept them for years and that some of their children are now a part of the primary labor market.

The most important step in moving into the primary labor market is to get an education. The presence of a relatively large number of young people who are now involved in higher education is at least in part due to G.E.D. programs which have allowed one time dropouts to go on to school. The majority of educated Puerto Ricans whose oral histories were collected were not involved in industry but rather with community organizations, government, education, human services, or communications. Again, the implication is that the jobs might be good but not particularly stable or long term ones. Nonetheless, this core group of people centered in the primary labor market is involved in the community. Related to this group is a fluctuating fringe of people who are basically secondary workers.

The following job histories will help document the Puerto Rican labor market:

"I started working when I was thirteen years old. In school I worked part time, two hours after class. I quit school at sixteen and got my working papers. I knew my mother needed help to keep meeting our needs, so I would turn my earnings over to her. I only made 75 cents an hour, the minimum wage in 1954. I was working in Premier Food Market. The owner, besides my salary, gave me a weekly grocery to take home--rice, beans, potatoes, things he knew he was not going to sell and were getting old."

"My first job as an adult was at Imperial Lamp and Shade at 642 N. Broad St., 75¢ an hour. I was there for two years. It was during the Korean War and there were a lot of jobs around. Sometimes I had two different jobs at the same time. The longest I was ever unemployed was a month. In the mid 1960's I decided to go to Los Angeles with my brother. There we opened a supermarket for six years. As my mother aged she asked me to return to Philadelphia so I did. In 1968, I got a job with the Philadelphia Employment Development Corporation, there I earned a hundred dollars a week. That same year I campaigned for Mayor Rizzo, and after his election I was assigned to the Mayor's Office of Hispanic Affairs." (953)



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"In Puerto Rico, I worked in a cigarette factory, a mild powder company, and a salt cracker factory. In 1945, when I came to the United States I was making 75 cents an hour. Everytime I finished or was laid off from one job, there was always another one available. I had never participated in strikes. When I first started working in Puerto Rico I left school because my family was very poor. I have worked in New York, Miami and Philadelphia." (955)

"My father was a merchant marine so he was away from the family for many years. My mother was a nurse's aid, then she received some training in a factory. As an adult, my first job was a clerk typist part time and sales girl. At the hospital where I work now, my initial job was statistical clerk. Then they trained me to draw blood and then to work in the laboratory. At work they have a union but for my department they do not because they say we are professionals. I consider my job to be dangerous because I work with chemicals and vapors which are harmful to my health. The longest I have ever held a job is four years. I have never been unemployed. I have left jobs for better pay." (951)

"My father was in the Armed Forces, before that he had a food stand in Puerto Rico. My mother found a job in Philly through a friend she had here. My parents always pushed me to take a trade, they never pushed college on me. My father went into a coma and lost his left eye. He tried to get disability, but he was never able to. When he started working as a dishwasher, he lasted 3 weeks. The boss said he was slowing up the work. The first job I had was in a pharmacy as a carrier, 97 cents an hour. The second job was in a factory in the shipping department. Then I had a job as a truck driver carrying vending machines to stores. When I graduated from high school I worked in International Paper Co. I had a good relationship with my boss. I was making \$3.50 an hour. I asked him if I could get into the presses, because they made \$4.10 an hour. My boss said 'No' and I said, 'That's cool. I will give you a two-weeks notice, if I cannot move up there is no sense in staying.' Now, I am working in MAB selling paints." (954)

"Después que me casé me mudé de Coamo para Aguirre. Mi esposo trabajaba en la Central Aguirre y la Central nos dio una casa de cemento para vivir. Yo trabajaba en la casa planchando para los amigos de mi esposo que trabajaban en la Central. Mi esposo se ganaba como \$40 semanales. En el 1944 el vino solo a los Estados Unidos a trabajar en la Campbell Soup Company en Camden. En el 1947 el nos mandó a buscar y buscó un apartamento en Philadelphia, en la seis y Green." (959)

"When my father first came over here he was working in the farms in Jersey. He worked there a while and then he did factory jobs." (960)

"Mi esposo trabajaba en una finca de café y siempre que se terminaba la cosecha de café él se venía a los campos de New Jersey a trabajar, a cortar esparragos y yo me quedaba en Puerto Rico. El se quedaba por acá como tres meses. El venía para acá por un contrato que le daba un hombre que se dedicaba a ir a los campos recogiendo personas que querían venir acá a trabajar, le pagaban el pasaje y ellos venían. Esto era para el 1969 hasta el 1974. En el 1974 el no quiso ir a trabajar en la finca y se fue a Boston y consiguió trabajo en una factoría." (984)

"I feel that the major problem that Puerto Ricans face when they come to the United States is the language barrier. When they come here to the United States, the first thing they have to do is get on Welfare because they do not know any English. People wouldn't hire them. They may get a job, but it has to be through someone pretty close to the bosses. That's the only way you can get a job. People look at Puerto Ricans today because they are on Welfare, they say that Puerto Ricans come here to get on Welfare. That's not right. I feel that if Puerto Ricans had the opportunity they would work. I know many, many people that come up to me and say 'I don't know



why they don't hire me. Maybe it's because I don't speak English.' that's the first thing they say. How are they going to get an income? The only place is Welfare. There should be opportunities here, open more doors for Spanish speaking only that come from Puerto Rico." (956)

"Cuando llegué a adulto trabajé en la fábrica de cigarrillos, trabajé en la fábrica de leche Denia, en la fábrica de galletas y trabajé en una fábrica de costura también. Esas fábricas eran en mi pueblo, en Bayamón. Muchas mujeres trabajaban en esas fábricas. Antes en Puerto Rico habían muchas industrias bonitas, no se ganaba mucho dinero pero se vivía tranquilo con el dinero que se ganaba. Una persona se podía ganar \$15 o \$20 semanales pero eso te daba a tí para todo lo necesario." (955)

"Los dueños de la factoria eran americanos. Muchos de ellos se llevaron sus esposas de acá, compraron sus casas allí y allí están muchos de ellos todavía. Algunos de ellos eran sacados porque ya pasaron, tú sabes que estan allí por diez años sin pagar taxes. Pero después de esos diez años tienen que pagar taxes, entonces cierran la factoría y se van. Los supervisores los llevaban de aquí pero los obreros eran puertorriqueños. Esa factoría despues la cerraron y entonces ellos se trajeron algunos de los empleados que tenían de allí, puertorriqueños, pues los traían para aca. Porque entonces iban a trasladarse aca. Entonces traían a algunos de los muchachos que trabajaban allá que quisieran venirse con ellos se venían aca y entonces ellos los usaban acá. Les daban las facilidades, quizás de pagarle el vuelo y demas para que se vinieran acá para que trabajasen con ellos acá." (987)

"En el 1945 empecé a trabajar en Fuentes Fluviales en Puerto Rico. Entonces de Ponce nos mudamos a Aguadilla, de Aguadilla a San Juan. En Philadelphia yo trabajé en un garage que quedaba en Callowhill y la Tres por 20 anos, pero me enfermé y no pude seguir trabajando. Ahora no recibo pensión porque de acuerdo con la unión y la compañía hay que tener 25 años de servicio para recibir pensión. Cuando me retire el superintendente me dijo 'usted tiene aquí 20 años de trabajo, es una pena que usted no puede recibir una pensión pero usted va a tener todo el respaldo de la compañía en cuanto a pasajes y esas cosas por cinco años. Usted va a poder viajar para donde quiera en esta guagua gratis, usted y su esposa por cinco años.' " (001)

"Right now I am trying to get a business of my own. I don't have the money to start off with. All I have is a house that I am paying for, an old beat up car, and the furniture in it. I make enough money and my wife as bank secretary makes enough money to pay the bills. We make \$13,000 a year, between the both of us. That's just enough money to make it. I heard once that there is a third middle class that is the working poor, which is true. I am working out a dealership with MAB. I have been with MAB more than about three years now, before that I was with them another three years. I always wanted to make money and the only way you could be free within this system is to be self employed. What I have done is submitted a package to the small business administration but I haven't gotten a word from them. I have been denied by Model Cities and the State because of 100% financing." (954)

"I used to work in a hospital where the administration was really craking down on certain things. Well, they were more worried about the people that worked there than about the people that were sick there. They were selling dope at the hospital, the patients were being sold dope, just marijuana. I could not deal with being part of something like that and finally quit. I told them that I had death in the family and needed a leave of absence to go to Puerto Rico and they told me that I could not have it. After that I went to work in a factory and I could not deal with that. It was moving boxes about 300 pounds and the money was not what I thought it should have been. If I move a box that weights 2 or 3 times more than I do, we were in danger all the time and I thought that my life was worth more than \$2.70 an hour. Now I am working at Taller and I like it. It is wonderful. I make less money & it's less people that I get in contact with but I love it because I am working with my people, finally. (996)

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SECTION III: CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE
MIGRATION



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Cultural Dimensions of the Migration

Going beyond the physical process of the migration and the employment and housing situations, interviewers sought to learn the social dynamics of such an uprooting. They wanted to know about life in Puerto Rico as remembered by individuals now living in Philadelphia. What cultural values, customs, patterns had been brought from island life and maintained here? What about language, religion, music, literature--oral and written? What about cultural conflict, identity, discrimination, and the proverbial return to Puerto Rico? The following are excerpts on these topics selected from the interviews and presented without interpretation or comment.

VIDA EN PUERTO RICO

Nos mudamos del barrio para la finca porque sucedió que mi padre se enfermó cuando era mayordomo y cuando ya no podía rendir todo el trabajo le dijeron que tenía que mudarse porque él vivía en una casa de la misma finca donde el trabajaba de mayordomo. (965)

My father used to tell me stories that he was told by his father. That his father's father was a Spaniard and the way he used to talk and that he used to go with him to "El Morro." They went to El Morro to take food to the soldiers that were fighting against all the other countries that were after us. My grandfather used to stand by the walls, when he went to El Morro, and wait until the enemy started climbing up with ladders and hit them with clubs. An when the enemy was too strong, he would go up to the next wall, and when the enemy got up there fight there with clubs, and my father's grandfather used to be fighting in that war, and his son used to take them food for lunch time and everything. This was the Spanish American War. This food was not just for the soldiers, but the people that were fighting, the Puerto Ricans. See, it was not only the soldiers that fought in the war. (964)

Yo nací en San Juan, Puerto Rico en el Hospital de Veteranos en el 1953 mientras mi papá estaba peleando en la guerra. (958)

El trabajo que mi papá hacía en las fincas de azúcar era regar abono. El dice que los capataces se portaban mal y los ajoraban mucho y que la paga no era suficiente para lo que hacían. (976)

En Puerto Rico yo trabajé en el gobierno municipal y en la misma factoría que trabajaba mi papá, en la Low Joint Pipe Co. (976)

My father was a merchant in Puerto Rico, he owned both large and small businesses. He owned "kioskos", candy stores, restaurants, butchery, milk dairies, and "ventorrillos" He owned these businesses in the year 1914, during the strike of the tobacco workers in Puerto Rico. During this strike my father's businesses began to fail. He then had to sell our house because the government of Puerto Rico presented a new plan of organization in the town of Puerta de Tierra which involved the building of new ports. We had to leave Puerta de Tierra and moved to the town of Santurce in a neighborhood called "Trastalleres." This happened in 1921. My mother worked with my father. I also helped in their stores and learned about the dealings of business. (986)

VIDA EN PUERTO RICO

Yo me recuerdo de la depresión de los años 30, que no teníamos que comer. En ese tiempo le bajaron el pago a mi papá. Teníamos un vecino que nos quería muchísimo y el tenía mucho terreno sembrado con batata, yuca, calabaza y café y entonces nosotros todos íbamos ahí a ayudarlo a él. El nos daba de eso para comer. Siempre comíamos pero a veces teníamos que comer funche con habichuelas guisadas de lo mismo que se cogía de las talas y así era que podíamos vivir. Mi papá tenía como tres cuerdas de terreno y ahí sembrábamos cositas también. Criábamos lechones pero mi papá era tan bueno que a los vecinos le regalaba la carne, no la vendía. (959)

En esos tiempos yo oí decir que Albizu Campos era malo, ahora sé que no es verdad, porque él estaba defendiendo la tierra de nosotros que tanto teníamos que trabajar en ella porque era que los americanos querían coger nuestra isla. (959)

Cuando éramos pequeños y nos enfermábamos no nos llevaban al doctor porque no había dinero pero mi mamá tenía siempre sembrada hierba buena, curia, tartago, juria. Con esas matas era que ella nos daba teses, gracias a Dios que nos mejorábamos. Esos eran los teses que ella nos daba para podernos curar y nos daba baño de altamisa cuando nos daba fiebre. Aquí a veces yo voy a la botánica y compro yerba buena, aceite de almendra y semilla de lino y hago teses para la alta presión que me vienen bien. (959)

Yo nací en el 1931 en la casa, con comadrona. Todos en casa nacieron con una comadrona. Según yo tengo entendido ellas tenían que tener un permiso especial del municipio. Ahora, para sacar ese permiso especial yo no sé que entrenamiento ellas tenían que tener. (979)

Yo nací el 22 de febrero de 1902. Mi papá se dedicaba al trabajo agrícola en los campos. Cuando había poco trabajo él se sostenía jugando. El era un jugador muy bueno. En aquella época la vida en Puerto Rico se podía vivir con cualquier cosa. No importaba lo que uno ganara. Apenas se ganaba dinero pero se podía vivir con más tranquilidad que ahora. (001)

La cuestión de educación en Puerto Rico era un poquito difícil para las personas pobres. Solamente se veían en las universidades los hijos de los ricos. Había poca sabiduría, a pesar de que habían muchachos que tenían inteligencia y sabiduría intelectual pero no fueron desarrolladas por falta de recursos. (001)

Antes en Puerto Rico había mucha hospitalidad, que se ayuda mucho una persona y la otra. Por eso era que la vida no se hacía tan difícil. Pero ahora no. Ahora todo es cuestión de dinero y cuestión de lujo. (001)

My parents were both born and raised in Ponce. They lived there until they came here 22 years ago, like in 1953. My parents had a small business in Puerto Rico, a restaurant, that's the kind of work they did over there. My father used to work part time in the docks, when the ships came, he would go and work and he used to work in the sugar cane fields, too. These were only temporary jobs. The rest of the time he spent on the restaurant. My father built his own house in Puerto Rico. (964)

Mi padre era trabajador agrícola y después era mayordomo en una hacienda y más tarde tenía su propia finquita. Era una finquita de 12 cuerdas y él la compró en malas condiciones y con duros trabajos y la ayuda de todos los hijos la puso en una forma muy buena, que por cierto la vendió por muy buen dinero. (965)

CULTURA

Mi mamá se casó a los 14 años. Cuando yo me criaba a lo que los padres le daban más importancia era a la educación. Mis padres se divorciaron después de 22 años de casados. (961)

Bueno, yo me expreso mejor en español pero si tengo que ir a algún lado pues hablo inglés. Solamente uso el inglés cuando tengo que hacerlo, yo acostumbro eso.

El inglés cuando me lo hablan yo lo entiendo y a veces lo puedo hablar pero en palabras no tan largas, pero hay veces que cuando viene un americano a hablarme inglés que yo no se, las palabras de ellos son bien diferentes, como ellos pronuncian las palabras pues hay veces que yo no puedo hablarlo cuando vienen americanos a hablarme. El inglés que me hablan los puertorriqueños lo entiendo más, pero a veces entiendo a los americanos pero cuando hablan suave, no tan rápido. (998)

En mi casa yo cocino comida criolla y hago mi compra en las tiendas hispanas. (961)



CULTURA

Mi mamá carga los pantalones aunque nunca los usa. Eso es algo raro que yo encuentro en las familias puertorriqueñas, que el hombre siempre está con esa actitud de machismo pero en la casa la que manda es la mamá, es la que se encarga de todo. (957)

My mother used to be the activist in the house and my father was passive. He always felt that she was the big boss but he loves her and he has learned to accept it. (966)

1963-A At the time I wasn't married and I was working I gave some money to my mother or most of it. Ten or fifteen dollars for myself is a lot because I used to go dancing and things like that, I wasn't really saving money, I would party with it.

1955-A Cuando yo trabajaba le daba la mitad del dinero a la familia, para ayudar.

Most of my friends that married American girls are divorced now. The women kept the children. (954)

La mujer aunque se dice que va debajo siempre va encima porque, por ejemplo, tú le dices a tu esposo "OK tú eres el jefe" pero siempre se sabe que la mujer es la que hace, pero para hacerlo sentirse bien a él le dice "OK papi tú eres el que manda."

Me gusta la música de nosotros. Una danza bien tocada. Lo mismo que el baile. ¿Quién sabe bailar aquí? Los americanos lo que saben es brincar. (001)

La cuestión esa de nacionalidad de que muchos se casan con puertorriqueños porque tienen la facilidad de establecerse, como nosotros pertenecemos a esta nación. Por ejemplo el Colombiano o el Mexicano se casa con una puertorriqueña y ya se puede establecer aquí. (001)

En mi casa se habla castellano. No podemos hablar otro y no lo cambio por otro. Es bueno que se sepa dos idiomas y si es posible mas porque es un desarrollo en tu persona, pero el idioma de uno no lo debe nunca uno olvidar. Yo critico mucho a los padres latinos aquí que los hijos no saben hablar español ni una sola palabra. Le deben enseñar el idioma original de nosotros. Esta bien que aprendan el inglés porque eso es un porvenir para ellos, pero el idioma de nosotros es nativo no es de los americanos. Lo mismo que el idioma inglés es de los americanos no es de nosotros tampoco. (001)

A nosotros nos gusta mucho imitar y ponerle nombres americanos a los hijos en vez de llamarlos María o Juana. Somos a veces ignorantes. Queremos aparentar lo que no podemos ser. Allá cada loco con su tema. (001)

RELIGION

1961-A Yo voy a la Botánica a comprar velones porque soy devota de San Judas Tadeo y le prendo velas.

Yo soy bien activo en la Iglesia San Pedro y en la capilla La Milagrosa.

Yo iba a escuela católica y estudié la Biblia con los Testigos de Jehová pero ahora no visito ninguna iglesia. (976)

I have been to a Botánica plenty of times, to buy my chango, my "collares." Well, since I am playing congas right now and I have heard from the big times that you can pray to a santo by playing the drums and that the santo will get you to a greater height. I heard that you play to a certain santo--chango, yemaya, or obatala. (972)

Puedo mirar la religión en dos términos. Puedo mirar en términos de mi cultura, que es parte mía, que me han criado con eso de Papa Dios y la Virgen y que ruegale a Dios y esperanza en Dios y entonces lo político, por el otro lado es que eso aguanta a las personas. La gente esperando en Dios se quedan con las manos vacías. (007)

Yo quise bautizar la nena, puede ser supersticioso, puede ser también que por tener ese compadre y la comadre y porque me lo rogo mi madre y la abuela de la nena. La familia alrededor quería que yo la bautizara. Ellos decían que le hacía falta que si yo no sabía que si ella se moría de aquí a mañana a donde iba a parar. (007)



EDUCATION

Mi mamá está cogiendo clases de inglés de noche, ella siempre se defiende. (969)

Yo estudié en la escuela católica San Eduardo. Ahí me ayudaron a conseguir una beca para estudiar en el Philadelphia Technical Institute. (968)

I want to try to finish my education. That is one thing that is most likely needed in your life and I want to be a Disc Jockey, that is my biggest goal. I have always rapped about it. I have always tried to get somewhere. I have tried Latin New York, something for my people. I have been to a radio station. I know the experience. I love it. (972)

When I graduated from Mastbaun there must have been about 300 Puerto Ricans in the class and out of that maybe 20 graduated. They are lazy, they wanted to get married. They see their parents on Welfare and get lazy. (996)

While I was in high school I had a job as a Machinist, I was taught in school to be a Machinist. The job I have now as a draftman, I learned part of that in high school and I am going back to school now to learn more in drafting at night. (004)

Yo estoy en la escuela Kensington que dan programas bilingües, o sea cuando llegué a la escuela me metí en el programa bilingüe que hay clases, los maestros son hispanos pero ellos no quieren que nosotros hablemos nada en español, quieren que todo lo hablemos en inglés, estoy en la escuela en el programa bilingüe. Ese programa me ha ayudado mucho. (998)



IDENTITY

I came back to Philadelphia in 1969. My brothers combed their hair, they had this afro. The comb sticking up their hair. I couldn't believe they were loosing their latin rhythm. They were having problems in school. They were going to Edison and they said that there the guys wanted them to join the gangs and if they didn't join the gangs they would get beat up. In Puerto Rico you didn't see that, you saw it but not in the same way. My brothers ended up dropping out of school because they were scared to go. I don't blame them. I don't regret going to high school in Puerto Rico. I enjoyed it. (960)

One time my father said to me "You are American" and I said "Hold it, I was born in Puerto Rico" "but since we are living here we are Americans" he said. (954)

Mi nena es bien blanca y tiene los ojos azules, cuando nació, al instante que yo la vi pense "Esta nena puede perder su cultura, ella puede colarse de blanca." Y pensé que a mí no me gustaría eso, así que siempre la tengo en casa de mi mamá, le hablo español y le enséño todo eso que sea puertorriqueño para que no se olvide. (007)

Cuando yo me criaba en New York y aquí en Philadelphia no había ese movimiento para uno ser orgulloso de ser puertorriqueño. Se puede decir que era "the other way around" que ellos querían que tú seas americana y entonces eso crea problemas, aunque no se ven, porque uno no pertenece al mundo blanco y si no aprende lo puertorriqueño ni empezando hablando español entonces no pertenece a ese mundo tampoco y uno se ve perdido. (007)

Yo quiero aprender sobre la historia y cultura de Puerto Rico para poder enseñarle a mi nena. (968)

New York has always been my hometown and it will always be. I will always know how to travel in it. I think I'LL never get lost. You just ask anyone "Do you know where this street is, 147th and Manhattan?" and when you come to Philly it is a lot quieter to me. New York is more exciting, more dances, more latin happenings. Channel 41 and 47 which is Spanish programming. In Philadelphia you don't see this.

I was into this thing that I thought I was Black, I wanted to be Black and I would say that. After I graduated then I thought "If I ever become something, why I am giving this people the credit, I should give my people the credit, so that they could have something they could be proud of." Working at Taller, I am finding out more about my people, things that I didn't know, that I wanted to know. I never thought we had anybody important, but we do. We have many people that contributed into the world affairs, that people don't realize. I didn't realize it until I started working at Taller. When it comes time to leave that job, it is going to be very rough. I haven't laughed and smiled and have such a wonderful time in a long time ever since I started working here. (996)

DISCRIMINACION

Yo creo que no es tanto la discriminación en cuanto a la raza o color aquí. Lo que yo he visto hasta ahora es que para uno conseguir algo tú tienes que tener como decimos nosotros "Palita." Hay un grupo conectado que si no es para ese grupo una cosa o tú no conoces a alguien en ese grupo tú no llegas a ningún sitio. Eso es mayormente lo que yo he visto. Pero en cuestión de problema racial yo no he visto. (957)

Eso de discriminación, esos tiempos son pasados que tú no los viste ni tus papás. Esos son historias que la gente se saca de la cabeza. (955)

I went to get an apartment in an all Italian neighborhood and the woman was very cold because I am Puerto Rican. (951)

2007-A Sobre la actitud racial que tienen los blancos contra los puertorriqueños, yo creo que, hablando de los blancos que viven mayormente en Kensington y Fishtown yo pienso que como ellos son tan pobres como nosotros y ellos ven que nosotros ahora vamos avanzando cogiendo empleos y buscando casa y ellos le tienen miedo a eso. Como no conocen, ellos se sienten amenazados por los puertorriqueños. (007)

2007-A Aquí en Philadelphia yo he visto más prejuicio, pero es un prejuicio tan suave que uno no se da cuenta. Y no puedo decir que me han negado servicio pero me miran mal. Si me monto en el trolley como que le repugno o algo. No me pueden decir "No, no te voy a dar esto porque eres puertorriqueña, pero te puedo mirar mal." (007)

2007-A Yo se que mi mamá tiene miedo. Ella es un poco más oscura que yo y miedo porque muchas veces los blancos se creen que ella es morena americana. Ella se ha dado cuenta que si ella se pone a hablar en inglés y ellos se dan cuenta que ella no es morena americana entonces ellos como que la tratan diferente. (007)

2009-A Este sitio aquí no se compará más nunca con Puerto Rico. Yo como criado en una cultura puertorriqueña con una sociedad puertorriqueña con valores puertorriqueños con ideas puertorriqueñas y vivir en una sociedad americana, simplemente la encuentro racista, hipócrita, deprimida, no se, no me gusta. (009)

2009-A El racismo en Puerto Rico no es un racismo de razas, o sea blanco y negro. Sino es un racismo de clases. Tú eres pobre, tú eres peor. No es que tú eres mas prieto tú eres peor. Si tú eres más pobre eres peor. O sea es racismo pero un racismo de clases no de razas, de tez, como en Estados Unidos. En Estados Unidos existen las dos cosas que es peor. Para mí es peor. (009)

1980-A Nunca sufrí una discriminación. No, yo sabía inglés. Y siempre estaba junto con los americanos. Yo sabía el inglés bien bueno. Yo hablaba mejor que los mismos americanos. (980)

2001-A Yo he vivido aquí muy bien y no me puedo quejar de esta nación, no he tenido problemas con nadie ni con la policía, soy un hombre que me gusta respetar la ley. Han pasado cosas que son de lamentar. Nosotros los puertorriqueños tenemos un sistema, la sangre de nosotros es caliente. Tenemos que pensar que este es un país que a pesar de que pertenecemos a el por ley, no nacimos aquí y este país tiene leyes distintas a las leyes en Puerto Rico. Mi esposa y yo tenemos 28 años aquí y yo no tengo que quejarme de la policía a pesar de que se han cometido muchos abusos, yo lo se. (001)

2001-A Los americanos nos creen inferiores porque no dominamos el idioma inglés. Ellos creen que Puerto Rico es una jungla y están muy equivocados. (001)



DISCRIMINATION

1972-A There are things that have happened to me here that would never happen in New York. In New York, they say that it is the most dangerous city and it's a lie. I have never been in New York and gotten beaten up by a gang of White boys. When I came to Philadelphia, I have never, never gotten bother by Black people. We were always together. I know how to dress, how to rap. They knew where I was coming from. (972)

1972-A There is a restaurant called Hardy's, around Allegheny, where they make hamburgers where nothing ever happens--3rd and Allegheny about 30 to 40 White boys jumped me and beated me really bad. If I were to tell you the story I might want to stop and not remember. It all started when a White boy with a blackjack started calling me a Spic and he wanted to hit me with the blackjack. I got to punch him on his face, my shoe came off, I tripped and fell--that's when he got me and hit me with the blackjack across the head, I got 8 stiches, got my jaw broken out of place, my ribs were kicked in--I couldn't breathe. I wanted to call for the ambulance. The cops from the 25th District said "OK we will keep a watch on them. Don't worry about it." They got away with it. (972)

1986-A I remember observing an incident in a restaurant in New York. When Black persons would finish eating, the dishes they used would be destroyed. I was lucky I never encounter things such as that. I also remember going to a club with a Black friend and because of his color he was not able to enter the club. I felt bad because they are part of my race, but what could I really do. (986)

1986-A I remember when I came to Philadelphia there was a store owned by Germans who refused to sell to Puerto Ricans. This store was located at 5th and Jefferson. The Germans didn't want to sell any goods to Puerto Ricans. There were many German families living in that area at that time. (986)

2004-A Most of the people where I work are White and I am Puerto Rican and I sort of feel funny in the place. I feel left out in little things they do. I have been working there 2 years and they may have certain things or events and talk about certain things and I am left out all together. I am sort of not being there, really. (004)



REGRESO A PUERTO RICO

1959-A Por mi gusto me fuera para Puerto Rico permanentemente, lo que me tiene aquí son mis hijos porque mi esposo murió y como estoy sola no encuentro comoirme sola para Puerto Rico. En Puerto Rico tengo un hermano y una hermana pero no me gustaría ir a vivir con nadie. Me gustaría tener una casita mía. Pero yo no puedoirme a vivir sola, los hijos míos ninguno quiere caminar para allá. Si yo me fuera otra vez para Puerto Rico no me mudaría para acá otra vez, me quedaría allá porque la vida en Puerto Rico es mejor y es mas saludable para las enfermedades. Cuando yo voy allá me siento bien y acá me siento enferma. (959)

1960-A Every time a crisis arose my parents resolved it by going back to Puerto Rico or coming back to Philadelphia. They did that about eight or nine times. My father was always going back and forth from Puerto Rico to Philadelphia. Now they are in Puerto Rico. (960)

1984-A Al tú estar en Puerto Rico es como si estuvieras aquí. Dondequiera que tú te metes hay dos o tres gringos, donde quiera que tú te metes están hablando inglés, en las escuelas se esta enseñando mayormente inglés. Yo fui a Puerto Rico y yo me sentía como si estuviera aquí, la única manera que yo me sentía que estaba en Puerto Rico fue cuando fui al campo. (984)

1966-A Most of my uncles are alcoholics and there really isn't any level of communication. Their aspirations are different from the ones I have. We don't have any common grounds except where we came from. They are part of a culture also and I am not, not as much as they are. They still feel they're in the Island, that whenever they want to go to the Island they can go. They go every two years or every year, and go to the Island and have a good time and then come back, but you come back to where you started, you haven't progressed, especially economically. I have uncles that spend thousands of dollars traveling back and forth. A couple of them have started building their homes for their dream of returning to the Island. They are actually getting ready to retire but there is no pension coming. The only thing they can be looking forward to is Social Security. (966)

1951-A I went to Puerto Rico to visit friends. I do not have any relatives there, they all live in the United States. (951)

1986-A I have always loved Puerto Rico and I would love to live there, but my family is here. Today in Puerto Rico the living is very high, it's difficult for the poor to live there. If I had money, I would return to Puerto Rico. (986)

1996-A I don't feel related to the Island. I haven't done anything for the Island to be proud of me yet. The people born there, I feel they had a gift that I was deprived of. I would have loved to have been born there, and people calling me a "jibaro." Because that is part of being Puerto Rican, that's heritage. I will eventually go to live there. I have been there several times and I found out that if I was going back there I would not speak another word of English, because I would not want to be a Puerto Rican from here, I would want to be one strictly from there. The Puerto Ricans here are not teaching their kids their language and they cannot speak Spanish. (996)

2004-A I don't think I would go to live in Puerto Rico permanently, unless I am sure I can have a good job down there and would make out alright. (004)

1998-A Mientras yo pueda vivir en Puerto Rico, vivo en Puerto Rico. Ahí fue donde yo nací, se puede decir que donde me crie. No voy a adaptar mi vida aquí en los Estados Unidos pudiendo ir a Puerto Rico. Como quiera que sea vuelvo otra vez a Puerto Rico. (998)



Flight *Vuelo* 947

Leaves *Salida* 800

SEATS ASSIGNED AT GATE

BALTIMORE WASH INT'L

SAN JUAN P R



SECTION IV: PORTRAIT OF A MAN--INTERVIEW
with Don Pedro Vasquez



Int. Me gustaria que usted me dijera donde y en que año usted nació.

Sub. Yo naci el 22 de febrero de 1902.

Int. ¿Y nacio?

Sub. En Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Int. ¿Sus padres también son de Ponce?

Sub. Todos, mi padre y mi madre tambien eran de Ponce, el era de Humacao pero por mucho tiempo vivió en Ponce.

Int.

Int. ¿Usted tiene hermanos y hermanas?

Sub. Tengo dos hermanos, una hermana murió.

Int. ¿Todos nacieron en Puerto Rico, en Ponce?

Sub. Todos.

Int. ¿A que se dedicaba su papá?

Sub. Mi papá se dedicaba a trabajo agricola, trabajaba en los campos. El no trabajaba mucho porque el era un hombre que era jugador de aspicio (gambling) pero el trabajaba también. Como trabajaba en los campos habia veces que habia poco trabajo entonces el se venia a los pueblos a lo que se volvia otra vez recuperar el trabajo se sustenia jugando. El era un jugador muy bueno. En aquella época la vida en Puerto Rico era una vida que se podia vivir con cualquier cosa. No importa lo que uno ganara. Antes en Puerto Rico la vida era muy barata porque apenas se ganaba dinero pero se podia vivir con mas tranquilidad que ahora. Después de eso la cuestión de educación en Puerto Rico era un poquito difícil para las personas pobre. Solamente se veian en las universidades los hijos de los ricos. Había poca sabiduria a pesar de que habian muchachos que tenian inteligencia y sabiduria lectural pero no fueron desarrollada por falta de recursos. Y así sucesivamente era la vida en Puerto Rico. Habia también mucha hospitalidad, no había aquello de decirte "si tú no tienes y yo tengo tú te quedas como estas y yo me quedo como estoy." Habia ese companerismo, esa cosa que se ayuda mucho una persona y la otra. Por eso era que la vida no se hacia tan difícil. Pero ahora no. Ahora todo es cuestión de dinero y todo es cuestión de lujo.

Int. Para esa epoca que tipo de labores hacia su mama?

Sub. Mi mamá lavaba ropa.

Int. ¿Y se encargaba de todo en el hogar?

Sub. Si.

Int. ¿Y ustedes cuándo eran pequeños ayudaban en la casa?

Sub. Yo como era el mayor de ellos llegué a cierta edad de que ayudaba a mi mamá. Pero después que mi papá murió nosotros quedamos bien mal eso fue como a la edad de 12 anos. Yo estuve en la escuela y solamente pude llegar hasta el segundo grado porque aquella época no era como ahora que antes daban almuerzo en la escuela, en otras palabras los presupuestos de los pueblos eran muy pequeños no daban. No podían ayudar aunque quisieran. Entonces yo tuve que a esa edad empezar a buscar mis chavitos para ayudar a mi mamá.

Int. ¿En que año murió su papá?

Sub. Hace un promedio de sesenta años. Empeze a desarrollarme, a buscar mi vida y ayudar a mi mamá. Nos quedamos entonces ella y yo y una hermana más que murió, pero entonces como ella era joven volvió a casarse otra vez y el segundo marido era un buen hombre también. Casi como mi padre. Un hombre comprensivo, muy humano, nos trataba bien y nos quería mucho a todos. Murió también a pocos años. Entonces quedamos mi mamá, mis dos hermanos de madre. Entonces yo le dije a mi mamá como hermano "Mamá ya debes de quedarte sola con nosotros, podemos vivir como Dios nos ayude y ya yo me ganaba mis chavitos, yo hacía mandados y vendía maní tostado en los cines. Antes en la entrada de los cines la gente se reunían para esperar que empezara la película y entonces yo vendía mi maní allí y me buscaba la vida.

Int. ¿Y de ese dinero que usted ganaba se lo daba todo a su mamá?

Sub. No. Yo le daba lo que podía. Pero tenía que comprarme lo mío, ayudarla a ella y tener algún dinero para seguir comprando el maní. Ya yo tenía 4 o 5 muchachos más que me vendían maní en distintos sitios.

Int. ¿Cuántos años usted tenía?

Sub. Tendría como 14 años. Yo no solamente me dedicaba a vender maní. Yo me iba al mercado por la mañana. Porque el maní lo vendía de noche en el cine. Pues yo me iba al mercado por la mañana y esos jibaritos que venían con su carguita y yo le ayudaba a bajar la carga en la acera de la plaza, cogía la bestia y la llevaba a un sitio y cuidaba su bestia y así me ganaba mis chavitos. Pero la vida era tan barata que todo se podía resolver. Entonces a mí siempre me gustaba el automóvil. Ah, puse también un negocio de agua. Sabes que antes en las casas no tenían plumas de agua adentro. Tenía que buscarla en las plumas públicas. Bueno, yo me inventé un carrito, lo hice yo mismo. En ese carro cabían dos latas de gas (5 galones). Yo metía dos latas iba a la pluma y las llenaba y vendía la lata de agua a diez centavos. Yo tenía diferentes formas de buscarme la vida.

Int. ¿Y que edad tenía cuando estaba trabajando?

Sub. Ya era bastante jovencito. Después de eso me metí a trabajar en un garage público para guardar carros. Necesitaban un muchacho para cuando llegaran los clientes para estacionarse. Y ese fue mi primer trabajo de responsabilidad. Pero como a mí me entusiasmaban mucho los automoviles empecé yo mismo sin nadie enseñarme. Me trepaba en los carros y yo miraba bien y empecé yo mismo poco a poco a echar para atras pa'lante los cambios. Gracias a Dios que nunca tuve la culpa de guallar a ninguno porque yo salía de un extremo de la puerta aquí... acá dando pa' tras y dando pa'lante y así empecé. El garage creció y entonces yo tenía que mover los carros de mucha gente. No tenía licencia todavía, saqué la primera licencia a los 24 años. Entonces cuando saqué mi primera licencia yo dije ya yo puedo colocarme en la casa de un rico con mucho pesos y así lo hice entonces ganaba.

Int. ¿A que edad se casó usted?

Sub. Yo he sido casado dos veces. La primera esposa y yo fuimos casados 14 años.

Int. ¿En que año se casó usted?

Sub. Yo tengo 38 años con esta. Yo tendría como 22 años 21 algo así. Procreamos una hija que está en Puerto Rico. Tuvimos que separarnos por circunstancias desagradables entonces me quedé un tiempo soltero y me coloqué en una oficina de pasajes de automoviles y ahí conocí la esposa que tengo. Una vez que ella fue a la oficina con una amiga mía, me la presento y ahí empezamos ya yo estaba divorciado, con el tiempo nos casamos. Hace 38 años que estoy casado con ella.

Int. ¿Usted se casó como en el 40?

Sub. Como en el 45 algo así, la segunda vez. Al haberme casado con ella ... entonces pues dejé el negocio de carros públicos y me puse a trabajar en la fuentes fluviales en Puerto Rico entonces de Ponce nos mudamos a Aguadilla y de Aguadilla entonces yo me mudé a San Juan y en San Juan fue que cojí el trabajo en eso pues un hermano de ella se vino para acá con la esposa y nos mandaban cartas "Venganse pa'acá que acá las cosas están mejores que si ustedes saben que fulano es bastante joven y puede conseguir un buen trabajo aquí por el tiene idea y le gusta trabajar en transportación ." Llegamos aquí en el año 1949 a esta ciudad.

Int. ¿Qué tipo de consejo le daba sus papás a usted? ¿Qué pensaba sobre las mujeres y bebidas y fumar?

Sub. Mi papá una vez me dijo "Mi hijo yo no tengo ningún derecho sobre tí en la cuestión de como tú piensas. Tú puedes pensar políticamente por el partido que te guste, religiosamente la religión que te guste esos son asuntos tuyos. Yo no me puedo meter en eso ni nadie." Y siempre me daba buenos consejos, "Tú puedes hacerlo todo pero hazlo en orden, que tú no te perjudiques ni perjudiques a nadie." Eso fue el último que no era mi propio padre pero como dije anterior muy bueno. Yo he tenido la suerte no sabiduría de colegio pero me han dado una experiencia muy grande. Llegamos aquí a Filadelfia entonces yo renuncié allá. Ella llegó un mes antes que yo, en el trabajo que yo tenía, tenía que esperar un mes. Presentar la renuncia, esperar un administrador a lo que conseguían otro pa' ponerlo en mi puesto. Bueno llegamos aquí apenas habían 100 puertorriqueños y donde empezó la colonia fue en la calle 7 entre Spring Garden y Girard.

Int. ¿Usted se acuerda la dirección de donde estaba viviendo el hermano de su esposa?

Sub. El 621 de la calle 7. El 615 de la 7.

Int. ¿Y el garaje?

Sub. Cuando yo me fijé en el garaje, ese quedaba en Callowhill y la 3. Entonces yo me rime por allí y me puse y vi aquel garaje. Como yo manejaba guagas en Puerto Rico también. Llegó un señor taliano que era el "foreman" yo ne entendía nada en inglés. Lo que sabía decir era "Yes" y "No". Yo llegué allí y el me dice "What are you looking for?" y yo vi entonces un señor lavando una guagua allí yo me fijaba. Y él parece que se dió cuenta que yo me fijaba y me hizo así... y esa fue la contesta "Yeah" bueno parece que yo le caí bien. Estaba específicamente necesitando una persona para remplazar a ese señor, uno que trabajara de noche y otro que trabajara de día, da la casualidad que llego yo allí me dice se... me quizo decir que volviera la semana siguiente pero no sabía como decirmelo y me lo dijo en inglés. Yo no entendía pero como mi cuñado sabía inglés cuando el llego del trabajo por la tarde yo lo llevé allá y él me tradujo que él estaba necesitando uno para que lave guaguas si tú quieres cojer el trabajo pues tienes que venir el lunes a las 8 de la mañana. Así fue como empecé yo aquí. En ese sitio estuve trabajando 20 años hasta que me retiré.

Int. ¿Ese fue el único trabajo que usted tuvo aquí?

Sub. Si.

Int. ¿Porque fue que usted decidió venirse para acá?

Sub. Porque mi esposa se entusiasmo "Bueno vamos pa' allá a buscar mejor ambiente" porque mi esposa tenía ambiciones también. "Vamos pa' allá que puede ser que nos convenga tú estás joven yo estoy bastante joven y hacia poco tiempo que nos habíamos casado y estábamos de sitio en sitio. No teníamos una seguridad, no teníamos un sitio



estable entonces yo dije "Está bien." 6

Int. Despues que vino a Filadelfia, ha vuelto a Puerto Rico?

Sub. Yo iba cada dos años cuando mi mama estaba viva, ahora desde el 70 no voy pero si Dios quiere al fin de este año o al principio del otro voy porque yo voy a ver si consigo un pedacito de terreno allí. Para mi concepto aquí se vive mejor que allá en un sentido. Puerto Rico está un poco difícil de vivir el que no tiene la casa propia es primer problema de Puerto Rico. Con lo que mi esposa y yo recibimos podemos vivir pero tenemos que tener una casita porque no podremos pagar renta.

Int. Tiene planes de ir a vivir definitivamente?

Sub. Definitivamente. Yo debo de esta casa como \$1,000 y tan pronto la termine de pagar mi esposa especialmente está en Puerto Rico a ver que es lo que le dicen. Allí que estamos bien relacionados. Yo he vivido aquí muy bien y no me puedo quejar de esta nacion no he tenido problemas con nadie ni con la policia, soy un hombre que me gusta respetar la ley. Han pasado... son cosas que he de lamentar las cosas que han sucedido pero hay que fijarse en las dos partes no fijarse solamente en una. Nosotros los puertorriqueños tenemos un sistema, la sangre de nosotros es caliente. Tenemos que pensar que este es un país que apesar que pertenecemos a él por ley no nacimos aquí y este país tiene leyes distintas a las leyes en Puerto Rico. Mi esposa y yo tenemos 28 años aquí yo no tengo que quejarme de la policia a pesar de que se que han cometido muchos abusos, yo lo sé. Pero muchas veces nosotros nos acalamos muchas y a veces proporcionamos el problema que si lo tratamos de evitar...yo no estoy ni a favor de la policia ni a favor del puertorriqueño, ni en contra de la policia ni en contra de los puertorriqueños. Soy puertorriqueño y quiero mi gente quiero mi patria mas que mi vida pero hay que darse cuenta que no podemos vivir como nosotros queramos, tenemos que vivir como Dios quiere que se viva.

Int. Usted puede decir como eran las cosas en Puerto Rico durante la depresión y la segunda guerra mundial?

Sub. La depresión fue en el año 1930. La depresión fue aquí pero como todos esos países de sur america y centro américa se puede decir que aún todavia se mantienen aquí si aquí habia la depresión tenía que verla en Puerto Rico, también bueno en Puerto Rico no se sentía tanto como aquí porque todo era demasiado de barato y antes la gente en Puerto Rico la agricultura habia mas agricultura hoy no la hay cualquiera sembraba y por ejemplo tú cosechabas un racimo de plátanos y no tenias que comprarlo tú me lo dabas y tenga toma llevese unos cuantos lleveselos pa' su casa no tiene que pagar. Asi sucesivamente podiamos resolver la depresión allá no se sentía tanto. Aquí si porque todo lo que se come aquí tiene que ser importado.

Int. Usted cree que si ahora mismo hubiera otra depresión Puerto Rico podria sobrevivirla como sobrevivió la del 30?

Sub. No. Porque con el progreso que ha tenido Puerto Rico han cambiado las cosas completas. Hoy la gente en Puerto Rico no estan acostumbrados a ganar poco dinero no se que la vida de un pueblo, de una nación es la agricultura. Hay dos cosas que son importantes la agricultura y la transportación. Si tú no siembras no tienes que comer, no importa que tengas miles de pesos en el bolsillo, no encuentras que comer porque no hay nada. Hay que pensarlo bien como vamos a vivir allí motivo que ya yo no puedo trabajar. Una depresión en Puerto Rico ahora es triste. En primer lugar esta nación no puede ayudar a Puerto Rico como le ayuda. En segundo lugar si no hay dinero allá porque aquí no lo hay la industria se vienen para acá hace o cualquier cosa la cuestión es que no hay. El trabajo se pone demasiado de caro el presupuesto baja. Allí hay un problema aquí mientras tanto por ejemplo a pesar de que la depresión es algo serio que paralisa muchas cosas pero aquí se hace el dinero. Aquí se fábrica el dinero.



Ahora, yo soy presidente de un grupo de ancianos aquí en Filadelfia y con eso me entretengo.

Int. ¿Usted recibió algún entrenamiento para el trabajo que tenía aquí?

Sub. Yo manejaba guaguas. Pero eso es un trabajo que uno empieza por lo más insignificante. Yo empecé de lavar guaguas. Y como yo conozco. A mí me interesaba tanto los motores llegué a ser el primer jefe, el único puertorriqueño. Y atrás de mí habían diez más. Yo era el número uno. De lavar guaguas empecé a mechanic helper, el último. Yo podía seleccionar mi día libre y podía coger mi semana de vacaciones cuando yo quisiera. Cuando venía el cambio de trabajo cada 6 meses yo era el primero que tenía que firmar. Cuando me retiré en el 1966 el superintendente me llamó y me dijo algo importante. Me me había olvidado... Yo tuve una enfermedad aquí. A mí me dio pulmonía complicada porque yo fumaba mucho. Compré una casa en la 4 al poco tiempo me enfermó, mi esposa me llevó a "Jefferson". Tuve unos cuantos meses en el hospital. Cuando yo llegué y pude recuperarme un poco que no tenía que trabajar todavía pero ya tenía necesidad de trabajar un poco. Mi esposa era la única que estaba trabajando. Yo fui al trabajo creyendo que ya habían puesto a alguien en mi puesto. Cuando yo fui allí, me dice "¿Usted vino a buscar su trabajo?" Yo dije "Hay algo?" Y dijo, "Como no si su trabajo está ahí. Hemos puesto una persona a lo que usted llega. Usted no ha perdido su trabajo, ni ha perdido tampoco su clasificación." Yo sufrí una prueba y me sacaron "pus" de los pulmones porque los pulmones míos estaban llenos de nicotina de cigarrillo y bebía, eso fue al principio de yo meterme en la iglesia. No es asunto de fanatismo, no me gusta el fanatismo pero toda las personas necesitamos a Dios y el que no necesita a Dios esta muy equivocado porque sigue nadando en seco. Hay que pensarlo. Tú puedes hacerle todo pero siempre piensa que hay Dios que te está viendo. Y te da chance, el no te dice a ti "No hagas esto." Aprovecha tu juventud pero recuerda que tú tienes que tener un tiempo en tu vida que debe Las iglesias hoy no salvan a nadie. Los pastores no salvan a nadie. El único que salva es Dios. Tú no vas ahí por el pastor ni la membresía, tu vas buscando a Dios. Y eso es una cosa muy importante en la vida. Bueno cuando yo volví entonces al trabajo llevé una carta "Este hombre no puede hacer fuerza." Yo tenía que cojer la goma y montarla así a presión. Cada goma de esas pesa 200 y pico de libras. El doctor hablaba un poco el español. Me dijo "Esta carta la estoy haciendo para su jefe, a decirle que si usted tiene su trabajo usted no puede hacer el mismo trabajo. Tiene que ponerlo en un trabajo suvase que usted pueda desempeñar sin perjudicarse." Bueno yo llegué allí con la carta. Y así al foreman. Ya no era el mismo foreman que yo conocía antes, ya lo habían cambiado. El otro había ido para Washington a trabajar en el garaje principal y luego y llamo al foreman y le dije "Este hombre es el jefe #1 el no puede hacer ningún otro trabajo. El solamente lo puede poner en mantenimiento." Mantenimiento es cuando llega la guagua echarle gasolina, chequearle la goma a ver si están de cambiar o algo. Yo estuve allí 20 años. No recibo pensión por el motivo siguiente. Allí tiene que tener de acuerdo con la unión y la compañía 25 años de servicio. Y entonces a mí me dio artritis. Yo tenía solamente que alzar la tapa del tanque y no podía con las manos. Ya yo tenía edad para retirarme entonces un día levantando la deso se cayó y por poco me esbarata la cabeza. Y cuando yo me retiré del trabajo pues el superintendente me llamó y entré en la oficina me dice el superintendente "usted tiene aquí 20 años de trabajo, pena que usted no puede recibir una pensión pero usted va a tener todo el respaldo de la compañía en cuanto a pasajes y esas cosas por cinco años. Usted va a poder viajar para donde quiera en esta guagua gratis, usted y su señora por 5 años.

Int. ¿Usted era miembro de alguna unión?

Sub. Sí. Todas esas compañías tienen uniones.

Int. ¿Tenía que ser miembro de ella?



Sub. Seguro.

Int. ¿Usted o su esposa alguna vez han sentido algún tipo de discriminación contra ustedes?

Sub. No. Lo único que yo sé que la hay y una discriminación estúpida. Es que el mundo se cree que la gente no entiende, que se creen... Hay discriminación especialmente en este país donde realmente es un país de la puerta abierta. Como aquí hay tantas clases de razas ese es el motivo por el cual hay discriminación y el mismo país en sí interiormente tiene su discriminación. Una misma raza. Fíjate como vive el moreno en el sur. Vive completamente distinto a como viven en el norte. Las leyes de los morenos en el sur no son las mismas leyes de aquí en el norte. Ellos no tienen libertad en el sur pero la tienen aquí en el norte y son americanos. Si son ellos mismos que tienen esas cosas que le será un extranjero. Yo estuve en una reunión esta tarde. Muchos de los ancianos van a comer a esos sitios y yo he notado, que yo voy cada rato a ver como los tratan, que en ese sitio son pocos los puertorriqueños, los viejitos y hay abundancia allí hay americanos prietos, americanos blancos, ucranios, puertorriqueños, y todo esos sitios donde hay tiene que haber algún problemita siempre y siempre nosotros los puertorriqueños estamos en minoría. Casi siempre nos tratan mal. No quieren reconocer que los puertorriqueños tienen una cultura bastante avanzada y una persona bastante culta, en esto ellos no quieren reconocer esto. El americano tiene un concepto muy erróneo de las demás razas, tanto el prieto como el blanco y ellos en sí la mayoría son saxones, verdaderos americanos, aquí hay muy pocos. ¿Sabes quienes son los verdaderos americanos aquí? Los indios. Esos son los verdaderos americanos de esta nación. Pero están en el sur, allí tienen ellos sus pueblos, pero son los verdaderos americanos. Porque aquí hay un 85% o mas de gente extranjera. Aquí tú tienes por ejemplo un nombre que es americano pero el apellido es ucranio. Es la liga que hay. Por eso es que nosotros estamos en minoría, porque no dominamos el idioma ellos nos creen inferior. Creen que Puerto Rico es una jungla y están muy equivocados. Yo soy capitán de este bloque por 2 años y no porque yo quiero decirlo, yo tengo la prueba ahí ha sido la única vez que ha ganado segundo premio. Y el alcalde Rizzo se sentó aquí donde tú estás sentado a hablar conmigo y tomó café también.

Int. ¿Usted conoce algún remedio casero para los dolores?

Sub. Con eso era que nos curábamos antes. Mi mamá con eso. Mi mamá me decía siempre el agua caliente es una gran cosa. Cuando tú te sientas mal toma agua caliente porque el estómago necesita.

Int. ¿Usted ha visitado alguna vez las botánicas aquí en Filadelfia?

Sub. Yo he visitado sí. La mayoría de la gente...

Int. ¿A qué iglesia pertenece usted? ¿A qué religión?

Sub. A los bautistas. En mi iglesia a veces se habla de esas cosas. De esos estudios que tienen que no debemos creer en esas cosas de espiritismo. En el mundo hay de todo y si hay de todo y Dios lo permite algún propósito tiene. Si tú no quieres ir a una botánica a comprar nada, nadie te obliga. Eso no tiene que ver nada con la religión. Yo digo que cada cual haga lo que quiera eso es asunto personal. Que yo hago lo que yo creo que debo hacer. Ni hablo de tu religión. Te amo primeramente como hermano y segundo como puertorriqueño también de mi misma patria y estoy en el deber de hacerlo porque Dios lo dice en sus palabras. Que nos amemos uno a los otros. ¿Tú perteneces a qué religión?

Sub. Católica.

Int. Yo fui monaguillo y fui sacristán. Sabes porque deje de ir? Por una casa que yo vi de un cura con una pobre mujer. Venía con un nenito muriéndose y no se lo quiso bautizar porque no tenía los dos pesos. Ahí fue que yo dije "Esto no es una religión nada". Reconozco que todos los curas no son iguales. Porque aquí el Padre Craven es

muy bueno. La casa del Carmen hace muy buenas obras. Esa iglesia de Girard Avenue. Los hospitales católicos también hacen muy buenos obras. Pero siempre hay alguna manzana podrida. La religión católica es muy ordenada en cuanto a los matrimonios, en cuanto al divorcio. Cuando hay una misa no se oye una mosca. En la iglesia protestante las mujeres van con carsones, con pantaloncitos cortos, eso es una falta de disciplina en una iglesia.

Int. ¿Usted cree en los santos y el espiritismo?

Sub. Yo no creo...bueno eso es cuestión de nosotros los hombres. Jesucristo dijo en su palabra que no creamos en ídolos. Yo no creo en eso. Tú le pides a El que interceda por uno cuando uno tiene fe en ese santo. Eso yo lo creo porque los santos tienen poder. Los que no tienen poder son las figuras esas.

Int. ¿Qué día de fiesta usted celebra aquí?

Sub. Yo celebro lo que se celebra aquí. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Año Nuevo.

Sub. ¿Y el Día de Reyes, lo celebra?

Sub. Nosotros sí lo celebramos. El americano no tiene ese conocimiento. Sabes lo que hago muchas veces cuando estoy de condiciones económicas, compro juguetitos y se los doy a los muchachitos de la escuela que tenemos. Muchos de ellos saben que es eso. Yo le hablo a ellos. La Nochebuena para nosotros es el 24 aquí es el 25. Eso de Santa Claus no lo conocíamos nosotros. ¿Sabes de donde es que viene eso? Del comercio. Tú ves que ponen una tienda como Gimbels pone Santa Claus y ahí van los muchachitos. Las madres llevan a los muchachitos pero no es con ese propósito. Es que la madre se pone a comprar y eso. Como el día de las madres, el comercio ha sido el que ha levantado esas cosas. Un mes antes ya las tiendas están diciendo "Mother's Day esto" y "Mothers Day eso." Y ese es el desarrollo de esta nación. Esta nación es una nación del dolar. Aquí quien manda y quien domina es el dinero.

Int. ¿Qué clase de música le gusta oír?

Sub. La música de nosotros. Una danza bien tocada. Lo mismo que el baile. ¿Quién sabe bailar aquí? Los americanos lo que saben es brincar.

Int. ¿Usted toca algún instrumento?

Sub. No.

Int. ¿Qué clase de comida come en la casa?

Sub. Comida criolla. Arroz y habichuelas, bacalao, ñame, yautía, aguacate, pollo...

Int. ¿Cuál es su restaurante favorito?

Sub. El spaguetti y eso es bien bueno. Donde yo vea arroz y habichuelas, pescado frito ahí voy. Yo no voy a los Ginos, ni a McDonalds. Yo voy si tengo que ir pero esos son cosas que a mí no me caen. En la 8 y Lehigh hay un restaurante bueno.

Int. ¿Usted conoce algún puertorriqueño o puertorriqueña que están casados con una persona de otra nacionalidad?

Sub. Sí.

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Int. ¿Usted cree que se ha podido adaptar siendo de diferentes razas?

Sub. La cuestión esa de nacionalidad que muchos se casan con puertorriqueños porque tienen la facilidad de establecerse. Como nosotros pertenecemos a esta nación. Por ejemplo

el Colombiano o el Mejicano y se casa con una puertorriqueña. Ya se puede establecer aquí. Yo conozco un cubano casado con una americana y son muy buena gente.

Int. ¿Aquí en su casa qué idioma se habla mayormente?

Sub. Castellano. No podemos hablar otro. Y no lo cambio por otro. Es bueno que se sepa dos idiomas y si es posible mas porque es un desarrollo en tu persona, pero el idioma de uno no lo debe nunca uno olvidar. Y yo critico mucho a muchos padres latinos aquí que los hijos no saben hablar español ni una sola palabra. Le deben enseñar el idioma original de nosotros. Está bien que aprendan el inglés porque esc es un porvenir para ellos, pero el idioma de nosotros es nativo no es de los americanos. Lo mismo que el idioma inglés es de los americanos no es de nosotros tampoco. Hay muchos de ellos, son ignorantes y estúpidos a la vez.

Int. ¿Qué usted opina de algunos puertorriqueños que han empezado a ponerle a sus hijos nombres americanos?

Sub. A nosotros nos gusta mucho imitar. Porque si yo voy a ponerle un nombre americano a mi hija debe de llamarla Maria, Juana, o lo que sea. ¿Qué hay de malo en los nombres originales? Es que somos a veces ignorantes. Queremos aparentar lo que no podemos ser. Allá cada loco con su tema.

Int. ¿En cuantos diferentes sitios de Filadelfia usted ha vivido?

Sub. Primeramente vivimos en la 7. Después viví un tiempito en la misma 7. De ahí entonces el apartamento que teníamos no querían arreglarlo nos fuimos a la 12, tuvimos muy poco tiempo allí. De ahí pasamos a Marshall, yo le dije a mi mujer. Ya yo tenía una economia pequena. Yo le dije "Mira a mí no me gusta estar sacando para aquí y para allá los trapos esto que tenemos estarnos mudando por ningún sitio. Vamos a ver si compramos una casita." Entonces compramos ahí en la 4 y Susquehana y Dauphin. (2229). Tuvimos allí unos cuantos anos. Cuando yo llegue allí ese sitio era bueno. Cuando yo llegué a esta ciudad era un encanto aquí. Los domingos no se veía ni un carro tocar la bocina. En el verano tú podías dejar tu puerta abierta, la ventana abierta y dormir frente de tu casa porque la calor era fuerte. La policía patrullaba. Todo era barato. La carne, el pan. Lo que conseguía caro era los productos latinos. Eso si porque lo tenían que traer de Nueva York. Ahí en la 4 eso empezó a descomponerse ahí. Cuando llegaron latinos. Yo soy puertorriqueño pero la verdad del cas es triste. Cuando llegué aquí, fui el primer latino que compró casa aquí. Esto era aquí un encanto. Y quienes somos. Mira aquí en este bloque tú tienes americanos, morenos y no oyen, tienen algunos viejitos. Muchas veces nosotros mismos no damos a demostrar la cultura que tenemos en una forma correcta.

Int. ¿Cuántos años usted vive en esta casa?

Sub. 14 años.

Int. ¿Usted conoce a alguien en Filadelfia que haya sido amigo suyo en Puerto Rico?

Sub. Tuve uno. Pero se mudo para allá otra vez. De mi mismo barrio.

Int. ¿Tiene algún pariente cerca de aquí?

Sub. No.

Int. ¿Y en Nueva York?

Sub. Una prima hermana. Tengo más familia allí.

Int. ¿Usted se siente ser parte de la comunidad aquí?



Sub. Todo el mundo me considera. Usted no hay más que preocupar por Don Pedro en el bloque 27 y saben quien es.

Int. ¿Si usted tuviera la oportunidad ahora mismo se mudaría para otro vecindario?

Sub. Sí, para el norte. He notado que para allá hay mas respeto. No hay tanto desorden.

Int. Si usted pudiera volver al año 1949, usted sabiendo lo que sabe ahora, tomaría la decisión de venir para acá?

Sub. No, que va.

Int. ¿Se quedaría en Puerto Rico?

Sub. Seguro que sí. Porque Puerto Rico ha progresado un poco. Ya no es como antes.

Int. ¿Usted tenía alguna preferencia para su mamá o su papá?

Sub. No.

Int. ¿Su esposa, que trabajos ha tenido desde que se mudaron aquí?

Sub. Ella empezo a trabajar en factoria pero ella no ha sido una mujer como las que trabajan "piece work". Ella es una mujer muy lenta y cuando yo estuve enfermo ella me ayudó mucho, pero mucho. Después que yo pude trabajar yo le dije ya tú no vas a trabajar.

Int. ¿En qué año fue eso?

Sub. Hacen como 12 o 15 años. Ella después de eso, trabajaba dos horas ahí a la hora del almuerzo de los niños, en una escuelita ahí. Y ella lo hace porque quiere. Pero yo no quisiera que trabajara. Porque con lo que yo recibo y lo que recibe ella vivimos bastante bien. Vamos dondequiera, si tenemos que ir a Puerto Rico vamos, tenemos unos chevitos en el banco, nos vamos a comer por ahí afuera cuando nos da la gana, nos comemos aquí lo que nos da la gana, todo el que viene aquí, porque eso es una cosa que me llena a mí de regocijo, a todo el que viene aquí poderle dar una tacita de café o cualquier cosita que tenga. Especialmente personas como ustedes que nunca han visitado y vienen con un propósito exacto.

Int. ¿Usted tiene algún cuento o alguna leyenda o algún dicho de su pueblo que me quiera decir?

Sub. Bueno sí, mi pueblo es la segunda ciudad de Puerto Rico, un pueblo que tiene muy buenas tradiciones, especialmente no sé si tú lo habrás visitado, Ponce. En Ponce hay un Parque de Bomberos que han habido muchisimos alcaldes que han querido tumbar ese parque, que es una tradición y el pueblo se ha amotinado, ese lo tienen como una reliquia.

Int. ¿Usted sabe lo que he visto en Ponce, un arbol bien, bien...

Sub. Bien cortado. Hay un arbol que le llaman la Ceiba.

SECTION V: EPILOGUE

The following paper presented at the ORAL HISTORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY CONFERENCE at Taller Puertorriqueno in June 1978 comprises Dr. Adriana Lewis Galanes's comments at the beginning and at the close of the project "Batiendo la Olla". It is presented here in English translation and also in the original Spanish.



THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM:
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

"Becoming conscious of our culture" includes a number of varied psychological processes whose complexity impedes illumination in only a half an hour (the time limit imposed on today's discussion), and the tasks become harder still when left to someone (as in my case) who lacks the formal skills needed for such a delicate subject so easily deformed when left in the hands of amateurs. Having admitted these limitations, we shall proceed to assign to ourselves the presentation of only that which a "humanist" may be permitted to do: 1) the background description of the topic under discussion, 2) the partial determination of the usefulness of the materials picked up by the Puerto Rican Workshop through the Project "Batiendo la Olla" (Stirring Up the Pot), whose key tool is a modest program of recording oral histories, 3) the explanation of concepts auxiliary to the discussion -- in my case, only what concerns an Oral History Project, and 4) the presentation of what still remains to be done, for there is always something left to be done. Nothing is final, and in order to reach to a certain measure the goals of this study project we must examine: (a) the comparison and the contrasting of life styles, and the becoming aware of being Puerto Rican by members of the first generation of immigrants, self-exiles and banished ones with the social expression and spirit of the members of the second generation "Puerto Ricans" born in the continental United States and (b) the development of a file of recordings on magnetic tapes and their corresponding graphic transcriptions, with the purpose of making accessible to the public a register of a "living" history (history from an individual perspective related by those who lived it) of Puerto Ricans transplanted in Philadelphia.

It is of maximum importance that we have the objectives of the project called "Batiendo la Olla" in mind, since they are reflected in this presentation. In other words, our discussion is not about Oral History in the abstract, but rather it deals with a concrete Oral History project with concrete objectives, without intending to be total or exhaustive in character.

We shall begin with the background of the topic ("Access to Tools for Self-Study: Oral History"). From the first of October to the 30th of September 1977, the Puerto Rican Workshop of Philadelphia, with funds granted by the National Endowment for the Humanities, undertook an investigative activity entitled "Batiendo la Olla: A Cross-Generational Comparison and Self-Study by Second Generation Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia." It is important to point out that said project was subsidized as a "Youth Grant." It was not a rigorous investigative project assigned to recognized scholars, but rather a training project for young people neither expert in the field nor in investigative methodology, who, by the use of techniques, approaches and orientations of the sociologist and anthropologist, utilizing the records of some 122 informants as a basis for the work, could systematically analyze themselves and arrive at certain conclusions regarding the Puerto Rican "I" and "We." For administrative reasons outside of the control of the Workshop, the project, in terms of such activities as graphic transcription, cataloguing, compilation of self-exams and final evaluation, was not able to be concluded until the month of June 1978. Even so, there were ends to be tied and various organizational tasks to be completed before the project could be called finished.

I insist that "Batiendo la Olla," commonly called "The Oral History Project" never meant to be anything more than a mini-project with limited objectives, thus operating within a limited context. Neither did the project participants allege that the fate of tapes and transcriptions would be an entire store of the Puerto Rican experience in Philadelphia. The description of the project only indicates that said file distinguishes itself by being an original contribution to the putting down in writing and on tape the history of an ethnic group --the Puerto Ricans in particular -- in the Philadelphia area. It is merely the sign of a beginning, an essay, highly worthy of praise, carried out by youths concerned with that "I am Puerto Rican" so critical to define, and by that "I am losing my Puerto Rican heritage" so anguished when the threat of being thrown into the culturally neuter mass of humanity is felt. Implicit is the judgment that a program of Oral History still has not been carried out where the methods utilized were rigorously scientific and whose procedures, during the tapings and transcriptions, were founded upon theoretical principles convened by people experienced in systematizations and field activity, in consultation with specialists in pertinent disciplines (anthropology, history, linguistics, sociology). This was never the intention.

The question, then, is: What are these materials called Oral History used for which the Puerto Rican Workshop furnishes to us as a tool for the study of the "I" and the "Other" immigrated, self-exiled, or banished Puerto Rican settled in Philadelphia? Initially, it can be said that the material demonstrates the ingenuity and determination of our Puerto Rican youth in the development and attainment of a project where it is all a matter of learning and arduous work. Imagine what a project like that would have been if the directors and interviewers would have had the support of academic resources, of a greater quantity of money in the original proposal! It is only correct that the youths who engaged themselves in this project be given their just praise. To show that the riches of the Puerto Rican community reside in its youth who, not fearful of the unknown nor timid in their affirmation of their Puerto Rican-ness and their individuality free of internal conflicts based on pseudo-myths is, in and of itself, of invaluable worth. The materials gathered also have the value of stimulating further studies. As a "prototype" they can be used in the study of the components and functioning of a working system needed to thrust ourselves towards the widening of boundaries to be encountered in the next investigation, allowing us to structure it with greater precision.

An examination of the materials made available to me by the Taller -- three written transcriptions of interviews, three evaluations done by project participants and interviewers, a complete description of the project done by the director, and a selection "a la montage" of commentaries taken from various transcriptions -- indicates that the modest objectives of the project have been reached. The sample that I examined points to a raised consciousness on the part of our young people, to a collection of interviews that allows for generational contrasts to be made, even though it is limited and is inconclusive in nature, and it points to an attempt to create an archive where the past and present of Puerto Rican men and women living in Philadelphia are brought together and coupled. It rounds it out to say that the project in its totality looks towards the future. Now, I repeat, this material does not make Oral History, in the strict sense of this category, classified as an informative science, but it constitutes the seeds of Oral History.

To define Oral History is difficult if it is conceptualized in conventional terms, since Oral History is not a "something" but rather a technique for the

gathering of information, the end product of which is a collection of magnetic tapes with their corresponding written transcriptions. The nature of the information which is compiled is determined by the objectives of the program designed, and the design of this program is based on a particular art or science -- or on a combination of various disciplines -- that guides the objectives. An Oral History program can have an immediate aim: the documentation of a historic flow or the testimonial revelation of data that explains matters that demand scrutiny. A program can also have an idealized aim, not subject to demands of the moment: the accumulation of tales, verbalized perceptions, judgments unusual knowledge, the acoustic-artistic expression of traditional and imaginative symbols, linguistic particularities, etc., of one or more persons joined by a topic, or topics, with the intention of being utilized by future scholars. In summation, Oral History is a technique subject to a plan prescribed by specific objectives which follow the program's aim, which at the same time is instituted founded upon rigorously conceptualized premises by persons trained in the discipline, or disciplines, whose approach is established by the objectives of the program.

It is essential to keep in mind that, even though the elaboration of a program of Oral History is an intellectual task that requires objectivity, the resulting materials distinguish themselves by their subjectivity, which makes us again insist upon the necessity of conducting an honest and disciplined analysis of the information collected on the tapes, especially if an interpretation of the findings will be attempted. Now, the results of an Oral History program need not necessarily be only for analysis: it can simultaneously serve as a storage place for information which, in turn, serves as a source of cultural enrichment or enjoyment for those wishing to listen to what is taped or read the transcripts.

With regards to what remains to be done, I shall return to my message delivered to the Taller Puertorriqueño in the Spring of 1977. Then I wrote the following:

"In our historic moment, when importance finally has been given to the singular contribution of each ethnic group that composes this conglomerate which we call the United States of America, it is urgent that a vertical inquiry be carried out regarding what is particular to each ethnic unit: their lives and the heritage which modifies their carrying out their daily tasks, their attitudes and ways

of seeing life. I do not speak here of an investigation for the purpose of a thesis, nor am I speaking of a study for the purpose of classifying any particular group, and much less of a contrastive analysis. On the contrary, I speak of recording what others from the "I" perspective assign as being an important experience, a valuable bit of news, particular usage, personalized popular knowledge and appropriate expression of a tradition. The aim of this collection would be to put down and show, before it is lost, the feeling Juan Pueblo has for life. If the investigator then wishes to parcel the information collected and rigorously examine a topic, which is compulsory, given the richness of the storage of culture as this one, his or her conclusions will be able to be partial and select, and not founded on fragmentary and one-sided evidence.

"In the case of the Puerto Ricans located in Philadelphia, such a gathering of materials is urgent because it represents the record of a history not written in the books, of individuals living in a period of socio-economic transition coinciding with the internal disturbance of a community in which there coexists -- and many times clash -- two generations that perceive the essence of being Puerto Rican and the nature of being North American in different ways. In other words, we simply cannot be satisfied with official history -- valuable to us as an arbitrary reconstruction of a past that can explain to us the unknowns of our present -- nor can we be satisfied with the many papers based on governmental statistics or limited studies which focus solely on one aspect of what constitutes the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia. This accumulation of data is vital to the investigation per se but should not be an end in and unto itself. It is necessary to compile all illuminating material of man and his cultural community, all of what is deposited in his memory, in his intellect, and in that hazy but very important zone we call the spirit, whose expression is psychic outbursts and unique vision of what is perceived as real permit, through an honest integral analysis, the full understanding of a people and their makeup. It is as much a scientific imperative as a humanitarian requirement.

"A project like this involves many varied activities for the setting down of testimonies: notes taken with precision, recordings of the verbal flow of the informant, exacting transcriptions and adherence to a strict method, even though apparently informal, of gathering sensitive information from the speaker-minstrel-historian. The value of this procedure is essential to the success of the project. The diligence in procedure shown by the implementer assures the project's seriousness. The complete accomplishment of the objectives will only be attained if the material investigated represents every corner of the culture's integral system.

"The bibliography concerning methods and procedures for the recording of Oral History is ample. Basic reference works are: Gary L. Shumway, Oral History in the United States: A Directory (New York: Oral History Association, 1971) and Manfred Waserman, Bibliography on Oral History (New York: Oral History Association, ed. rev. 1975). Indispensable is the reading of reports included in Oral History at Arrowhead: Proceedings of the First National Colloquium on Oral History (Los Angeles

Oral History Association, 1969) and Selections from the Fifth and Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History (New York: Oral History Association, 1972). Also obligatory is the scrutiny of The Oral History Review, where the variety of articles (i.e. Joseph Romey, "Legal Considerations in Oral History," 1973, 66-76) clarify old questions regarding the complete functioning of the project.

"A method of organizing the content of the Oral History to be recorded is proposed here in essay form: that history which is not written because it does not represent facts considered fundamental to the constitution of documented history, not under mechanical categories but by topic. In other words, we reject the usual classification structure used in a survey. The whole world of Juan Pueblo that will be revealed in the tapings, whose illation guides the informant, requires a necessary ordering. We would then bring together the materials under six general topics: (1) Personal data: names, places, dates, information on individual and group backgrounds, that spring out of the presentations for the purpose of identification; (2) political and non-political happenings as vital experience; (3) socio-economic occurrences which condition personal, family and communal movements; (4) natural accidents as events lived; (5) important personal experiences, family activities and those particular community happenings, like incidents which affect change; and (6) family-community traditions orally transmitted from generation to generation as a link between the present and the past. We shall explain.

(1) The common presentation identifies man and his micro-world of family, friends and neighborhood, in time and space. Book history tells of immigrations from the Puerto Rican countryside to the urban centers, and from there, by "jumping the pond," to the continent. These beings moving from one place to another have been stripped of their identity in official reports. Where they go is noted, perhaps because knowing how many there are by place is of maximum importance to those who compile statistics on population trends, but where they come from gets lost in the fog of numerology. If we believe like Ortega y Gasset that "I am me and my circumstances," the microworld of where I am is a component of my identity. The descriptive accounts concerning the level of education of the Puerto Rican assign Juan Pueblo to blocks that, at the same time, reduce him to percentages. There is no place that indicates who didn't go to school because, even as a child, he or she had to help in planting, harvesting and marketing of agricultural products, nor does it account for those who didn't want to attend school any more because every class was in English except Spanish class, when it was given, and day after day of not understanding what the teacher chewed up as English heavily mixed with and influenced by the local varieties of Spanish (inglich jibareao), and much less understanding of what was asked of him to read from irrelevant texts. The work by which a person earns his daily bread which makes him be assimilated into the broad category of "Laborer" when the Dept. of Labor does its report based on numbers so that economists can trace the employment and unemployment curves, represents for that same man -- or woman, of course -- an important part of his or her live, the worth or unworthiness of which influences

in the conformation of the ego, and thus requires that credit be given to it, however modest; it requires an individualization, a distinguishing itself from the masses, a being more than a piece of data included in a summary paragraph of an historic or sociological study. Juan Pueblo demands that his story be told.

(2) Written history describes, let us say, the political campaign that Luis Muñoz Marín initiated between 1938 and 1940 in order to accredit his new party, the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party) and establish a solid base in order to afterwards take command of powers of government. However, there is not a place where the record of the personal experience of the Puerto Rican who supported "Vate" can be found, when it was believed that it was a lost cause. Nor can there be found the personal experience of the unemployed laborer who felt harassed by hunger and overdue rent payments, who that day first heard the cry of "Pan, Tierra y Libertad" (Bread, Land and Liberty), the slogan of popular political leaders of yesteryear, nor that of the small traditional farmer who saw his effigy on the flag of the office-seeking party, on an island where by then noone wanted to be a farmer, and so on. Neither can there be found the feelings of other persons that lived moments without leaving their mark on any documents. The oral assertion of what that era meant for the I, and for my family, needs to be recorded: politics, like a list of dates and interpretations of what transpired on those dates, is not enough to eliminate the need for a complete view of the historic transformation of Juan Pueblo. Individual experience, whose relating is required, can only be asserted through verbalization, transcribed on paper or tape, of what is lived and felt, which still remains in the memory of the man that lived and felt it.

(3) The report of the benefits received in Puerto Rico with the Operación Manos-a-la-Obra (Operation Bootstrap) sounds extraordinary when one reads that by 1953 the program had succeeded in bringing 300 new factories to Puerto Rico, creating more than 25,000 new jobs. What is not written is what the rural Puerto Rican experienced when he found himself instantaneously marginalized on an island which was determined to convert itself into an industrial power, what he thought when they told him that this new program was not for him because he was not trained in mechanical work. The economic imbalance that shook him and impulsed him to emigrate to the urban zone, or to the continent, is described in books, but not the disturbance suffered by the man who did not benefit from the superseding of agriculture by industry, if indeed it was a benefit; nor can there be found in any document what was mentally perturbing for this man. It is important to report that point of view in order to truly explain history, a history that is humanized and, therefore, authentic.

(4) We read the statistics of hurricanes in Puerto Rico that, like floods, besides being island disasters, are individual catastrophes. Both the cyclone of San Felipe in 1928 and of Santa Clara in 1956, created a populational shift which brought about great urban problems, but we do not even find one written page dedicated to the relationship of said natural accidents from the perspective of the

human being who suffered them and whose life changed because of the event. The same thing occurs when droughts or now controlable epidemics which used to strike Puerto Rico are written about. The objective relationship of these happenings can be called history, but not a complete history if it lacks the living history that is filed away in the memory. It is urgent to record it now in order to interpret it.

(5) We do not read in written history about the relation of the wedding of Juan Pérez to Ana Martínez, nor about the baptism of Pepito Díaz, nor about Doña Micaela's Saint day celebration, and much less about the trick played on Don Geraldo on el Día de los Inocentes, that 28 of December which is dying out at the hands of "April Fools Day." It is logical that it be that way since, imagine what it would be like if written history recorded all the baptisms, birthdays, holy days, patron saint festivals, chanted rosaries, reveilles, St. John nights, Loíza Aldea festivals, carnivals, Good Friday processions, Christmas Eve dinners, instances of merrymaking, and good cock fights, without forgetting the many "crying times" that have been and will be in the world of the Puerto Rican! However, we cannot be satisfied with considering impossible the recording of all these personal experiences that are important to the informant, his family circle, and community in which he lives, since each of these activities creates the distinguishing features of the historic environs of the Puerto Rican. Such moments in history would seem superfluous in the official book but they are complimentary and illuminate the resistance to acculturation manifest in the diverse nuclei of Puerto Ricans on the North American continent, besides facilitating the study of the cultural dynamic of groups i.e., the community in Philadelphia vis-a-vis the community in New York, or the Puerto Ricans that came to Philadelphia from the island vis-a-vis the young people from the generation born in Philadelphia. The compiling of this data, together with the narration which gives it feeling, requires the recording of the verbal expression of the experiences; the spontaneity of the speech form revitalizes what has been lived and, even though there may be some exaggeration here and there, it gives validity to what is narrated.

(6) The most complicated task of all is the recording of the numerous forms of cultural expression which, like property inherited without an official testament, are transmitted from generation to generation without thinking about its genesis. It is not important where the forms of expression that represent the inexhaustible treasure of the people come from, such thing as traditional lyric expression, popular songs and decimas improvised or resung, narrations sung or resung, the romance and the plena, dance with song, the bomba with dialogue, the singing of the Blacks, the African bomba, the turuletes or lullabies, sayings, riddles, street vendor calls, incantations used in curing the sick, and recited prognostications, together with children's stories and games. Ethnography has occupied itself with filing this information, but its purpose, the reconstruction of the past, utilizing evidence from Puerto Rican folklore, has blinded the student to the importance of the very experience of recreating a song, a dance, street vendor calls, a saying, a game or a story like "había una vez y dos son tres." A record of these materials, not as vestiges

with an archaeological or anthropological value but as recreations of a past which is enriched by additions or suppressions of the present, would permit the Puerto Rican profile outlined by written history to acquire an additional dimension: man's creative impulse and vivacity, an unclear movement through time whose outcome is continuous regeneration. Let it be of maximum importance to get the exact moment the verse or children's game is articulated, since publishing Bomba pide el tocadore...or Doña Ana no está aquí...would be to take from the Puerto Rican singer what is his that sings to him, to take the game from him every time he sings it or brings it to mind. Family/community traditions, orally transmitted, is the most difficult to record because it is on the dividing line between literature and history, and because of this it requires exacting linguistic transcriptions from the informant/recreator; idiomatic peculiarities have as much historical value as the material which is recreated and recorded.

"The six general topics which I have summarily presented here include many forms of oral expression which constitute the unwritten history of the Puerto Rican. As I have said, this is a humble organizational essay to approach a complex task. The roots of Juan Pueblo cannot be revealed by a review of its political components, as is usually done in historical studies: a detailed and total approach to the subject is necessary. I find it urgent that this undertaking start in Philadelphia, and I feel that Philadelphia will be the incentive for other similar projects. I wish to rouse the experts in methodology, the students of Puerto Rican culture, those who are concerned because the image of the Puerto Rican as read in books lacks flesh and blood, the enlightened ones who struggle against the darkness of the past and, above all, those Puerto Ricans who carry in their memories the subtleties of their history; all of those who are concerned about oral history, I wish to incite so that they might commit themselves to the execution of said project.

"Juan Pueblo as an eye witness or participant to the soon-to-be event begs that his life, sometimes converted into dead script by erudition, be made into an active testimony."

Some time ago when the Oral History project was under way, under the auspices of the Taller Puertorriqueño, I pointed out the necessity to develop an Oral History program that would go beyond the bounds set by the NEH Youthgrant. Once more, I insist. I particularly insist on the arrangement of what is collected under topics, not formula like blocks of questions, since I share with Eugenio Fernández Méndez in that "The more conscious the historian, the greater the honesty, impartiality and efficiency he or she can show. The material should be gotten together, not under mechanical categories, by topics and in strict agreement with the most complete information available. Then, the casual relationships can be shown, the order of the parts, and the ample historic movements can be traced in their totality." (Historia cultural de Puerto

Rico, San Juan 1970).

Great History, no matter how much it talks about the origins of the common and ordinary man, misses the ordinary and personal aspects of the human experience. And Literature does not always bring with it the responsibility of undertaking such a burden with authenticity. Juan Pueblo can only be maintained alive -- not reflected or refracted -- by the recording of his voice. What a grave catastrophe it would be if accidents of human memory were to truncate the historical branches that comprise its complex whole!

I regard it as urgent that an Oral History program of the Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia start to be planned. "Becoming conscious of our culture" would be, communally and individually, only one of the effects of said program. The explanation of how and why one arrives at that state of self-knowledge, that in the long run is the primary goal of the original project already completed by the Taller, should be placed in hands more skilled than mine.

[Translation by
Tom Morton and
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FREE ASSOCIATED NOTES

(Notes without a logical order)

The distinction that History makes between what is essential, included, and what is superfluous, discarded, is in itself required by the historian because of the traditional format of his editing and because of the commercial demands of the press. It is not an intention to accuse History of sins outside of the control of the historian, while book orthodoxy and book sellers prevail.

The historic case of the recruitment of Puerto Rican Youths during the undeclared war in Vietnam should be inquired about; a record should be made of the perspective of those who voluntarily enlisted, the recruits, and those who looked for ways to avoid the draft. Along those same lines the attitudes and

Puerto Rican participation in the social and political protest movements of the years between 1960 and 1972 should be recorded. We would not want this period to turn into another silent conspiracy like the war in Korea, a matter presented by René Marqués in his detailed and debateable essay "El puertorriqueño dócil" of 1961 (in Ensayos, San Juan, 1966; expanded edition in 1972).

Specific strikes in Philadelphia, as well as the closing of factories, should be examined as experiences which altered the course of personal histories and community development. It would be useful to record the attitudes of the Puerto Rican towards protectionist instruments such as the Commission on Human Relations, paying attention to the quality of the experience, if contact was made, and the opinions expressed regarding the legal means available to the individual who is discriminated against for being a member of a minority group.

Let us remember the great hurricane of 1899, San Ciriaco. It influenced the Puerto Rican acceptance of the United States colonial regime more than History has recognized, in the year that General George W. Davis labeled the "year of transition" (Open Letter to the Puerto Rican People, August 15, 1899). The economic help from the invading country, together with the Red Cross and the agents of the Department of Health, brought there by the troops, created an atmosphere favorable to the colonial period. From the present period, the freezing weather of 1978 represents a trauma for those accustomed to the tropics, besides confronting an endless number of renters lacking appropriate heating facilities: realities that appear daily in newspapers but are not felt by the individual affected, unless it is a newsworthy experience. It is pertinent to inquire into these events.

It would be productive to examine the development of the rise of Santa Claus -- if indeed there is any -- in the Puerto Rican community and the decline of the Three Wise Men Celebration (Los Santos Reyes), if indeed it has declined --, in the same community.

The direct question method concerning oral tradition does not get far reaching results; what is correct is the stimulation of the informant's memory with varied models of that method. We suggest that the recorder spur the par-

ticipation of the subject-historian with the question: " Do you remember any... like this...?" Besides the traditional forms that I mention, there are in the voices of the people political verses, songs to make herb remedies work, incantations, sung ironies, baquine songs (African derived wake for a dead child), verses of different serenades, and other popular rhymes that stretch from the story of "Ratoncito Pérez cayó en la olla" to that enjoyable

Pues señor, éste era un gato
con las patas de trapo
y la cabeza al revés...
Quieres que te lo cuente otra vez?

loosely translated:

Well then sir, it was a cat
with legs made from rag
and his head on backwards...
Do you want me to say it again?



EL PROGRAMA DE HISTORIA ORAL: LO QUE HAY Y LO QUE URGE

El "tomar conciencia de nuestra cultura" conlleva variados procesos psicológicos cuya complejidad impide que se diluciden en una media hora (límite temporal de nuestra discusión de hoy) y, menos todavía, que se expliquen por alguien (como en mi caso) que carece de la pericia formal exigida por un sujeto harto frágil y pronto a la deformación en manos del "amateur." Admitidas estas limitaciones, proseguimos a asignarnos la presentación de sólo aquello que se le permite al humanista: (1) la descripción del trasfondo del tópico de la discusión, (2) la determinación parcial de la utilidad de los materiales recogidos por el Taller Puertorriqueño mediante el proyecto "BATIENDO LA OLLA" (cuyo instrumento-de-trabajo central es un programa modesto para el registro de historias orales), (3) la explicación de los conceptos auxiliares a la discusión -- en mi caso, únicamente lo que concierne a un programa de Historia Oral, y (4) el planteamiento de lo que queda por hacer -- siempre queda algo por hacer: nada es definitivo -- para alcanzar en cierta medida los objetivos de dicho proyecto-de-estudio: (a) comparación y el contraste del modo de vida y la toma de conciencia de ser puertorriqueño de miembros de la primera generación de emigrados, auto-exiliados y trasterrados con la expresión social y anímica de miembros de la segunda generación, "puertorriqueños" nacidos en el continente estadounidense, y (b) el desarrollo de un archivo, de grabaciones en cintas magnetofónicas y sus correspondientes transcripciones gráficas, con el propósito de hacerle asequible al público el registro de la historia "viva" (la historia relatada por el ser que la vivió desde su perspectiva individual) de puertorriqueños trasplantados a Filadelfia.

Es de máxima importancia que tengamos presente los objetivos del proyecto "BATIENDO LA OLLA" ya que son los puntales de nuestra presentación. O sea, nuestra discusión no es acerca de la Historia Oral en abstracto, sino que gira alrededor de un proyecto concreto de Historia Oral con objetivos concretos, sin intención totalizante.

Comenzaremos con el trasfondo del tópicio ("Access to Tools for Self Study" Oral History"). Durante el año del lero de octubre al 30 de septiembre de 1977, el Taller Puertorriqueño de Filadelfia, con fondos dados por el National Endowment for the Humanities, efectuó una actividad investigadora titulada "BATIENDO LA OLLA: A Cross-Generational Comparison and Self-Study by Second Generation Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia." Es importante señalar que dicho proyecto fue subvencionado con un "Youth-grant": no es un proyecto de investigación rigurosa asignado a estudiosos reconocidos, sino un proyecto de entrenamiento de personas jóvenes, no peritas ni en la materia ni en los métodos investigativos, para que mediante el uso de las técnicas, acercamientos y orientación del sociólogo y el antropólogo, utilizando el registro de la Historia Oral de unos 122 informantes como mesa de trabajo, pudieran sistemáticamente analizarse ellos mismos y llegar a ciertas conclusiones acerca del "yo" y el "nosotros" puertorriqueño. Por motivos administrativos -- fuera del control deo Taller --, el proyecto, en cuanto a sus actividades de transcripción gráfica, catalogación, compilación de auto-exámenes y evaluación final, no pudo concluirse hasta este mes de junio de 1978. Aún así quedan varios cabos que atar y varias tareas de organización antes de que se pueda llamar concluso este proyecto.

Insisto, el proyecto "BATIENDO LA OLLA," comunamente llamado "Oral History Project" nunca pretendió ser algo más que un mini-proyecto con objetivos limitados, y por lo tanto operante en una dimensión limitada. Los integrantes del proyecto tampoco alegaron que el archivo de cintas magnetofónicas y transcripciones sería un depósito cabal de las vivencias puertorriqueñas en Filadelfia. La descripción del proyecto sólo indica que dicho archivo se distingue por ser una contribución original al asentamiento de la historia de un grupo étnico -- los puertorriqueños en particular -- en el área de Filadelfia. Queda así como señal de un comienzo, de un ensayo, altamente loable, hecho por unos jóvenes preocupados por ese "ser puertorriqueño," tan crítico en definir, y por ese "se me va perdiendo mi herencia puertorriqueña," tan angustioso cuando se siente la amenaza de la masificación culturalmente neutra. Implícito aquí está el juicio de que todavía no se ha llevado a cabo aquí un programa de Historia Oral cuyos métodos sean rigurosamente científicos y cuyos procedimientos, durante el proceso del registro magnetofónico y la transcripción gráfica, se fundamenten en principios teóricos convenidos por personas experimentadas en la sistematización y la práctica de la actividad, en consulta con especialistas en las disciplinas pertinentes (antropología, historia, lingüística, sociología...). Nunca fue ésa

la intención.

La interrogante es, pues: ¿para qué sirvan entonces estos materiales, llamados "Historia Oral," que el Taller Puertorriqueño nos facilita como instrumento para el estudio del "yo" y del "otro" puertorriqueño emigrado, auto-exiliado, o trasterrado que está radicado ahora en Filadelfia? Inicialmente puede decirse que dichos materiales demuestran el ingenio y la determinación de nuestra juventud puertorriqueña en el desarrollo y la consecución de un proyecto donde es todo aprendizaje y arduo trabajo. ¡Imagínense lo que sería un proyecto así de haber tenido los directores y los elicitadores los recursos académicos, las facilidades de información pública de toda la comunidad y el apoyo de ésta, además de la disponibilidad de una mayor cantidad de dinero constante en el presupuesto! Es justo que se le dé mérito a los jóvenes que se comprometieron con este proyecto. Mostrar que el capital de la comunidad puertorriqueña reside en sus jóvenes, no temerosos de lo desconocido ni tímidos en la afirmación de su puertorriqueñidad y su individualidad sin conflictos basados en pseudo-mitos, es en sí algo de gran valía. Estos materiales tienen también un valor impulsor: como "prototipo" sirven para el estudio del funcionamiento y componentes de un sistema-en-práctica para así lanzarnos a ampliar los lindes de la siguiente investigación y estructurar ésta con mayor precisión.

Un examen de los materiales que me ha hecho asequibles el Taller -- tres transcripciones gráficas de entrevistas, tres evaluaciones elaboradas por participantes/interrogadores del proyecto, la descripción completa del proyecto hecha por el director y una selección a-la-montage de comentarios entresacados de diversas transcripciones -- indica que se han conseguido los modestos objetivos del proyecto. El muestrario examinado apunta a una "toma de conciencia" de parte de nuestros jóvenes, a una recogida que permite el contraste generacional, aunque esté restringido y no sea conclusivo, y a una tentativa de creación de un archivo donde se conjuguen el presente y el pasado de mujeres y hombres puertorriqueños emplazados en Filadelfia. Redunda decir que el proyecto en su totalidad mira hacia el futuro. Ahora, repito, no son estos materiales una Historia Oral, en el sentido estricto de esta categoría, clasificada como ciencia informativa, sino sementera de un proyecto de Historia Oral.

Una definición de lo que es la Historia Oral es difícil si se conceptualiza en términos convencionales, pues la Historia Oral no es "algo" sino una técnica

para la recopilación de información cuyo resultado es una colección de cintas magnetofónicas con sus correspondientes transcripciones gráficas. La información que se recopila es determinada por los objetivos del programa diseñado, y el diseño de este programa se fundamenta en el arte o ciencia particular -- o en una combinación de variadas disciplinas -- que encauza -- o encauzan -- los objetivos. Un programa de Historia Oral puede tener un propósito inmediato: la documentación de un fluir histórico o la revelación testimonial de datos que expliquen cuestiones que exigen un escudriñamiento. Un programa también puede tener un propósito ideal, no sujeto a exigencias del momento: la acumulación de relatos, percepciones verbalizadas, juicios, saber noticioso, expresión acústico-artística de signos imaginativa y tradicional, particularidades lingüísticas, etc., de una persona o personas ligadas por un tópico, o dos. En resumidas cuentas, la Historia Oral es una técnica sujeta a un programa prescrito por objetivos específicos que obedecen al propósito determinado del programa, que a su vez se instituye fundamentado en premisas rigurosamente conceptuadas por personas diestras en la disciplina, o disciplinas, cuyo acercamiento es establecido por los objetivos del programa.

Es esencial tener en cuenta que, aunque la elaboración de un programa de Historia Oral es una faena intelectual que exige objetividad, los materiales resultantes se distinguen por su subjetividad: lo que nos lleva a hacer hincapié otra vez en la necesidad de que el análisis de esa recogida oral, y más si se hace una interpretación, sea disciplinado e íntegro. Ahora, el resultado de un programa de Historia Oral no tiene necesariamente que ser sólo para el análisis: puede servir simultáneamente como depositario de una información que le sirve de fuente de enriquecimiento cultural o de plaza de recreo al que desee escuchar lo grabado o leer lo transcrito.

En cuanto a lo que queda por hacer, me remito a mi mensaje al Taller Puertorriqueño en la primavera de 1977. Escribí entonces lo siguiente:

En nuestro momento histórico, cuando al fin se le ha dado su debida importancia a la contribución singular de cada grupo étnico que compone este conglomerado que llamamos los Estados Unidos de América, es urgente que se haga una indagación vertical de lo que particulariza a cada unidad étnica: su vivencia y la herencia que modifica su quehacer, sus actitudes y modos de ver la vida. No hablo aquí de una investigación para demostrar una tesis, ni de un examen encami-

nado a clasificar a determinado grupo, y menos de un análisis contrastivo, sino de una recogida de lo que otros yo, desde el yo, consignan como experiencia importante, noticia valiosa, usanza particularizante, saber popular personalizado y expresión apropiada de una tradición. El propósito de esa recogida sería asentar y mostrar, antes de que se pierda el sentido de la vida de Juan Pueblo. Si el investigador desea luego parcelar la recogida y con rigor crítico examinar un tópico, lo que es forzoso dada la riqueza de un almacén cultural como éste, sus conclusiones podrán ser parciales o selectas pero no fundamentadas en evidencia fragmentaria o unilateral.

En el caso de los puertorriqueños ubicados en Filadelfia, tal recogida es exigida con premura porque representa el registro de la historia no-escrita-en-los-libros de individuos viviendo un período de transición socio-económica coincidente con el trastorno interno de una comunidad donde coexisten -- y muchas veces chocan -- dos generaciones que enfocan el ser puertorriqueño y el ser estadounidense de modos distintos. O sea, no podemos sencillamente conformarnos con las historias oficiales -- valiosas como reconstrucción arbitraria de un pasado que puede explicarnos mistificaciones del presente -- ni con las múltiples monografías basadas en estadísticas gubernamentales o mini-estudios de un aspecto del todo que constituye la comunidad puertorriqueña en Filadelfia: esa acumulación de datos que son de utilidad a la investigación en sí pero que no deben ser la finalidad de la investigación misma. Es necesario que se recopile todo el material iluminador del hombre y su comunidad cultural: todo aquello depositado en su memoria, en su intelecto y en esa zona borrosa, pero importantísima, que llamamos el ánima, cuya expresión en descargas síquicas y visiones únicas de lo sentido como real permiten, mediante el análisis integral, conocer a un pueblo, y entender sus componentes de una manera totalizante. Es un imperativo científico tanto como un requisito humanitario.

Un proyecto así envuelve variadas actividades para el asiento de testimonios: notas tomadas con exactitud, grabaciones magnetofónicas del flujo verbal del informante, transcripciones puntuales y adherencia a un método riguroso, aunque aparentemente informal, en la recogida de materiales sensitivos al hablante-juglar-historiador. La validez del procedimiento es esencial al éxito del proyecto. La diligencia del que implementa el procedimiento, del registrador, asegura la seriedad del proyecto. El logro cabal de los objetivos sólo se conseguirá si la materia indagada representa todos los rincones del sistema integral.

La bibliografía concerniente a métodos y procedimientos para el registro de la historia oral es amplia. Obras básicas de referencia son: Gary L. Shumway, Oral History in the United States: A Directory (New York: Oral History Association, 1971) y Manfred Waserman, Bibliography on Oral History (New York: Oral History Association, ed. rev. 1975). Indispensable es la lectura de las ponencias incluidas en Oral History at Arrowhead: Proceedings of the First National

Colloquium on Oral History (Los Angeles: Oral History Association, 1969) y Selections for the Fifth and Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History (New York: Oral History Association, 1972). Es también obligatorio el escudriño de The Oral History Review, donde la variedad de artículos (i.e. "Joseph Romey, "Legal Considerations in Oral History," 1973, 66-76) esclarecen cuestiones añejas al funcionamiento cabal del proyecto.

A manera de ensayo se propone aquí un modo de organizar el contenido de la historia oral a registrarse -- esa historia no escrita por no representar hechos considerados fundamentales al edificio de historia documentada -- no bajo categorías mecánicas sino tópicamente. O sea, rechazamos la estructura clasificatoria usual de una encuesta. El mundo íntegro de Juan Pueblo que saldrá a relucir en la recogida -- cuya ilación maneja el informante -- exige una ordenación vital. Reuniríamos, entonces, los materiales bajo seis tópicos generales: (1) los datos personales: nombres, lugares, fechas, información de trasfondo individual y familiar que surge en la presentación identificatoria; (2) los acontecimientos civiles o políticos como experiencia vital; (3) los sucesos socio-económicamente condicionadores como conmoción personal, familiar y comunal; (4) los accidentes naturales como lances vívidos; (5) las experiencias de importancia personal, las actividades familiares y los hechos particularizantes de la comunidad como incidentes de valor afectivo; y (6) la tradición familiar-comunal transmitida oralmente de generación a generación como punto de trabazón entre el presente y el pasado. Explicamos.

(1) La presentación común identifica al hombre y a su micro-mundo familia-amigos-vecindario, dentro del tiempo y el espacio. La historia libresca habla de las emigraciones del campo puertorriqueño a los centros urbanos, y de ahí, mediante el salto del charco, al continente. Estos seres en movimiento se han despojado de identidad en los informes oficiales. El dónde van se apunta, quizá porque saber cuántos hay por lugar es de máxima importancia para los compiladores de estadísticas poblacionales, pero el de dónde vienen se pierde en la bruma de la numerología. Si creemos con Ortega y Gasset que "yo soy yo y mi circunstancia," el micro-mundo de donde vengo, como modificador del micro-mundo en donde estoy, es componente de mi identidad. El informe descriptivo del nivel educacional del puertorriqueño señala a Juan Pueblo en bloques que, a su vez, se reducen a porcentajes: no hay lugar que indique quién no fue a la escuela porque todas las clases eran en inglés, excepto español cuando se daba, y día tras día no entendía lo que masticaba el maestro en inglich jibareao y menos lo que se le pedía leyerá en los deseparentados libros. El oficio con que el hombre se gana el pan de cada día, asimilado ése dentro de la categoría "laborer" cuando el Depto. de Trabajo hace su informe de numeritos para que los economistas tracen las curvas del empleo y desempleo, representa para ese mismo hombre -- o mujer, por supuesto -- una modalidad de su vida cuya valorización, o desvalorización, influye en la conformación del ego, y por lo tanto exige que se le dé crédito por más modesto que sea: requiere individualizarse, distinguirse de la masa, ser más que un dato incluso en un pá-

rrafo sumario en un estudio histórico o sociológico. Juan Pueblo exige narrarse.

(2) La historia escrita describe, digamos, la campaña política que emprendió Luis Muñoz Marín entre 1938 y 1940 para acreditar su nuevo partido, el Partido Popular Democrático, y establecer una base sólida para luego apoderarse del poder gubernamental. Sin embargo, no hay un lugar donde se halle un registro de la experiencia personal del puertorriqueño que apoyó al Vate, cuando se creía que era ésa una causa perdida, del obrero desempleado que se sentía acosado por el hambre y el pago de la renta en la casa de inquilinato aquel día que primero oyó eso de "Pan, Tierra y Libertad," lema de los populares de antaño, del jíbaro que vió su esfigie en la bandera del partido pretendiente en una isla donde nadie quería ya ser jíbaro, y, así, de otros seres sintientes que vivieron el momento sin dejar su marca en documentos. La deposición oral de lo que significó esta época para el yo, para el mi familia, necesita registrarse: lo político, como listín de fechas e interpretación de los acontecimientos en esas fechas, no alcanza plasmar la visión íntegra del devenir histórico de Juan Pueblo. La experiencia individual, cuyo relato es exigido, sólo puede asentarse mediante la verbalización, transcrita en papel o cinta magnetofónica, de lo vivido y sentido que todavía queda en la memoria del hombre que lo vivió y lo sintió.

(3) Nos suena extraordinario el informe de los beneficios adquiridos en Puerto Rico con la Operación Manos-a-la-Obra, la mentada "Operation Bootstrap," cuando se lee que para 1953 el programa había logrado traer 300 nuevas fábricas a Puerto Rico, creando más de 25,000 nuevos empleos. Lo que no se escribe es lo que experimentó el puertorriqueño de la zona agrícola cuando se encontró instantáneamente marginado en una isla determinada a convertirse en un poder industrial, lo que pensó cuando le dijeron que ese nuevo programa no era para él, por ser diestro en labores mecánicas. El desbalance económico que lo sacudió y lo impulsó a emigrar a la zona urbana, o al continente, se describe en los libros, pero la conmoción sufrida por el hombre que no se benefició de la suplantación de la agricultura por la industria, si acaso fue beneficio lo que fue desquicio, no se encuentra en documento alguno. Es preciso que se registre ese ángulo de visión para poder verdaderamente explicar la historia: una historia humanizada y, por lo tanto, auténtica.

(4) Leemos las estadísticas de los huracanes en Puerto Rico que, al igual que las inundaciones, además de ser desastres insulares son catástrofes individuales. Tanto el ciclón de San Felipe, en el 1928, como el ciclón de Santa Clara, en el 1956, crearon un desplazamiento poblacional que acarreó grandes problemas urbanos, pero no encontramos siquiera una página escrita dedicada a la relación de dichos accidentes naturales desde la perspectiva del ser humano que los padeció y cuya vida cambió a causa de ello. Lo mismo ocurre cuando se escribe de las sequías o las ahora controlables epidemias que antes azotaban a Puerto Rico. La relación objetiva de esos sucesos podrá llamarse historia, pero no historia íntegra si carece de la información vivencial que se archiva en el recuerdo. Se hace apremiante se registre ahora para interpretarla.

(5) No leemos en la historia escrita una relación de la boda de Juan Pérez con Ana Martínez, ni del bautizo de Pepito Díaz, ni de la celebración del día del Santo de Doña Micaela, y menos de la maldad que le hicieron a Don Gerardo el Día de los Inocentes, ese 28 de diciembre que está muriendo a manos del "April Fools Day." Es lógico que sea así, pues, ¡imaginéense lo que sería si la historia escrita registrara cuanto compadrazgo, cumpleaños, día bendito, fiesta patronal, rosario cantado, alborada, noche de San Juan, fiesta de Loiza Aldea, carnaval, procesión de Viernes Santo, cena de Nochebuena, tiempo de rayar, y buena pelea de gallos, sin olvidar tanta noche de llanto, ha habido y queda por haber en el mundo del puertorriqueño! Sin embargo, no podemos conformarnos con tachar de imposible el registro de todas esas experiencias de importancia para la persona, su círculo familiar y la comunidad en que vive, pues cada una de esas actividades crean los matices singularizantes del contorno histórico del puertorriqueño. Tales momentos en la historia parecerán superfluos en el libro oficial pero son en sí los datos colaterales que iluminan la resistencia a la aculturación manifiesta en los diversos núcleos boricuas en el continente estadounidense, además de facilitar el estudio de la dinámica cultural de grupos: i.e. la comunidad de Filadelfia vis-a-vis la comunidad de Nueva York, o los puertorriqueños que vinieron a Filadelfia de la isla vis-a-vis los jóvenes de una generación nacida en Filadelfia. La recopilación de estos datos, junto al relato que le da sentido, requiere el registro de dichas experiencias verbalmente plasmadas; la espontaneidad del habla vitaliza lo vivido y, aunque haya una exageración aquí o allá, le da validez a lo relatado.

(6) La tarea más compleja de todas es el registro de las numerosas formas de expresión cultural que, como bienes heredados sin testamento oficial, se transmiten de generación a generación sin pensarse en su genética -- no importa de dónde vienen, ni desde cuándo se conocen -- tales como la expresión lírica tradicional -- las coplas y las décimas improvisadas o recantadas -- las narraciones cantadas y recantadas -- el romance y la plena -- el baile cantado -- la bomba dialogada -- el cantar de los negros -- la bomba africana -- los turuletes o las nanas para dormir a los niños -- y los refranes, adivinanzas, pregones, ensalmos y pronósticos recitados, junto a los cuentos y juegos de niños, que representan el tesoro inagotable del pueblo. La etnografía se ha ocupado de archivar esta información, pero su propósito, el reconstruir el pasado utilizando evidencia del folklore puertorriqueño, ha cegado al estudioso a la importancia de la experiencia misma de recrear una canción, un baile, un pregón, un dicho, un juego o un cuento de los de "había una vez y dos son tres." Un registro de estos materiales, no como vestigios de valor arqueológico o antropológico sino como recreaciones de un pasado que se enriquece con las adiciones o supresiones del presente, permitiría que el perfil del puertorriqueño trazado por la historia escrita adquiriese espesor -- el impulso creador del hombre -- y viveza -- el movimiento indistinto a través del tiempo cuya consecuencia es la regeneración continua. De ahí que sea de máxima importancia el captar el momento mismo en que se articula la copla o el juego de niños, pues editar Bomba pide el tocador... o a Doña Ana no está aquí... sería robarle al puertorriqueño cantor lo suyo cedido al conjunto cantado cada vez que lo canta o lo rememora en voz alta. Es

la tradición familiar-comunal transmitida oralmente la más difícil de registrar por ser ésta un área limítrofe entre la literatura y la historia, y por eso exige exactitud en la transcripción lingüística del informante-recreador; las peculiaridades idiomáticas de ésta tienen tanto valor historial como la materia informada-recreada.

Los seis tópicos generales que he someramente presentado aquí incluyen muchas otras formas de expresión oral que constituyen la historia no escrita del puertorriqueño. Ya lo dije: es éste un humilde ensayo de organización para abordar una faena compleja. Las raíces de Juan Pueblo no pueden desentrañarse mediante un repaso de sus componentes de consecuencia política, como usualmente hacen los estudios históricos: es necesaria la labor detallista y totalizante. Estimo urgente que esta empresa se comience en Filadelfia, y confío que sea Filadelfia el móvil de otros proyectos de la misma índole. Quisiera así incitar a los peritos en materias de método, a los estudiosos de la cultura puertorriqueña, a los molestos porque la silueta del hombre puertorriqueño leída en los libros carece de carne y hueso, a los alumbrados que luchan contra la muerte del pasado y, sobre todo, a los puertorriqueños que llevan en su memoria las sutilezas de la historia: a todos aquellos a quienes le atañe el registro de la historia oral, deseo incitar para que se comprometan con la ejecución de dicho proyecto.

Juan Pueblo, como testigo ocular o participante del suceso luego historiado, solicita que su vivencia, a veces convertida por la erudición en letra muerta, sea hecha testimonio activo.

En aquel entonces, en marcha el proyecto de Historia Oral, auspiciado por el Taller Puertorriqueño, señalé la necesidad de desarrollar un programa de Historia Oral que fuese más allá de las coordenadas del NEH Youthgrant. Vuelvo a insistir en ello. Particularmente insisto en la ordenación de la recogida bajo tópicos, no agrupaciones de bloques interrogatorios a-lo-formulario, pues comparto con Eugenio Fernández Méndez el que: "Cuanto mayor conciencia tenga el historiador, mayor honradez, imparcialidad y eficiencia podrá mostrar en la misma...Debe reunirse pues, el material, no bajo categorías mecánicas, sino tópicamente y en estricto acuerdo con la información más completa que se pueda disponer. Así podrán mostrarse las relaciones causales y el orden de las partes, y los amplios movimientos históricos podrán ser trazados en su totalidad." (Historia cultural de Puerto Rico: San Juan, 1970).

La gran Historia, por más que se hable de la ascendencia del hombre común y corriente, soslaya lo ordinario y personal en la experiencia humana, y la Literatura no conlleva siempre la responsabilidad de emprender tal cargo con autenticidad. Juan Pueblo sólo puede mantenerse vivo -- no reflejado ni refractado --

mediante el registro de su voz. ¡Grave catástrofe sería que los accidentes de la memoria humana tronchacen las ramas historiales que componen su totalidad compleja!

Estimo urgente que se comience a planificar un programa de la Historia Oral de los puertorriqueños en el area filadelfiana. El "tomar conciencia de nuestra cultura" sería, comunalmente e individualmente, uno de los efectos de dicho programa. El explicar cómo y para qué se llega a ese estadio del autoconocimiento, que es a la larga la meta primaria del proyecto germinal ya hecho por el Taller, debe de quedar en manos más diestras que las mías.

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NOTAS LIBRES-ASOCIADAS
(Apuntes sin orden lógico)

La distinción que hace la Historia entre lo esencial, incluido, y lo superfluo, descartado, es exigida por la naturaleza del historiar en sí, por el formato tradicional de su redacción y por el reclamo comercial de la imprenta. No es nuestra intención acusar a la Historia de pecados fuera del control del historiador mientras la ortodoxia libresca, y de los libreros, prevalezca.

Se debe indagar el caso histórico del reclutamiento de los jóvenes puertorriqueños durante la guerra no-declarada en Vietnam: registrar la perspectiva de aquellos que se enlistaron voluntariamente, de los reclutas, y de los que buscaron medios de impedir el alistamiento arbitrario. Coincidentalmente deberían registrarse las actitudes y la participación del puertorriqueño en los movimientos de protesta social y política durante los años 1960 a 1972. No quisiéramos

que este período se convirtiera en otra conspiración de silencio como la guerra en Corea: asunto planteado por René Marqués en su debatido y debatible ensayo "El puertorriqueño dócil" de 1961 (en Ensayos, San Juan, 1966; edición aumentada 1972).

Huelgas específicas en Filadelfia, al igual que el cierre de fábricas, deberían examinarse como experiencias que alteraron el curso de historias personales y el desarrollo de la comunidad. De gran utilidad resultaría registrar las actitudes del puertorriqueño hacia instrumentos proteccionistas como el de "Affirmative Action" o agencias gubernamentales como la "Commission on Human Relations," prestándole atención a la calidad de la experiencia, si hubo contacto, y la idea profesada acerca de los medios legales disponibles al individuo contra quien se discrimina por ser miembro de una minoría.

Recordemos que el gran huracán de 1899, San Ciriaco, influyó más de lo que reconoce la Historia en la aceptación puertorriqueña del regimen colonial estadounidense en aquel año que el General George W. Davis consignó como "de transición" (Carta abierta al Pueblo Puertorriqueño, 15 de agosto de 1899): la ayuda económica del pueblo invasor, junto a la Cruz Roja y los agentes del Departamento de Sanidad traídos por las tropas, creó un ambiente propicio al coloniaje. De ahora, esta helada del '78 representa un trauma para el hombre acostumbrado al trópico, además de confrontar a un sinnúmero de inquilinos con la carencia de calefacción apropiada: realidades que aparecen en el periódico diariamente pero que no se adentran en lo sentido por el individuo afectado, a menos que sea una experiencia noticiosa. Un indague de estos lances es pertinente.

Sería productivo examinar el desarrollo de la ascendencia de Santa Claus -- si la hay -- en la comunidad puertorriqueña y la decadencia de la celebración de la fiesta de los Santos Reyes -- si es que ha decaído -- en la misma comunidad.

El método de preguntas directas concernientes a la tradición oral no consigue resultados de alto alcance; lo correcto es estimular la memoria del informante con modelos variados de esa expresión. Sugerimos que el registrador incite la participación del sujeto-historiador mediante la pregunta: "¿Se acuerda usted de algún...como este:...?" Además de las formas tradicionales que men-

ciono, están ahí, en la voz del pueblo, las coplas políticas, las décimas de yerbas medicinales, los conjuros, las ironías cantadas, los cantares de baquiné, los versos de serenata y otras rimas populares que van desde el "Ratoncito Pérez cayó en la olla" hasta aquel divertido

Pues señor, éste era un gato
con las patas de trapo
y la cabeza al revés...
¿quieres que te lo cuente otra vez?



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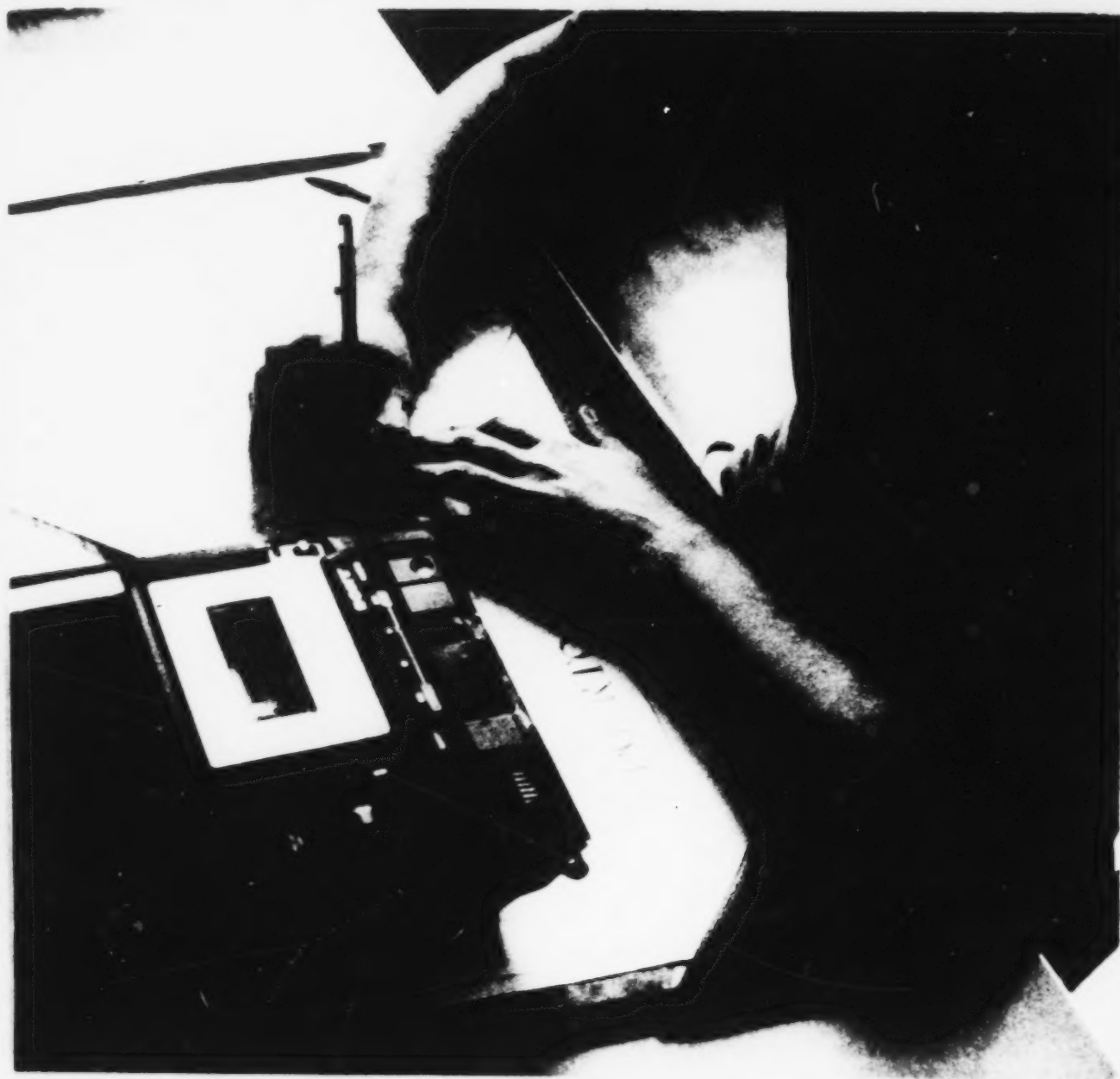
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